

Kjetil Fallan

Modern Transformed

The domestication of industrial design
culture in Norway, ca. 1940-1970

Thesis for the degree philosophiae doctor

Trondheim, October 2007

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Architecture and Fine Art
Department of Architectural Design,
Form and Colour Studies



NTNU

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Thesis for the degree philosophiae doctor

Faculty of Architecture and Fine Art
Department of Architectural Design,
Form and Colour Studies

© Kjetil Fallan

ISBN 978-82-471-4624-8 (printed version)
ISBN 978-82-471-4638-5 (electronic version)
ISSN 1503-8181

Doctoral theses at NTNU, 2007:210

Printed by NTNU-trykk

Para mi querida Miriam

Acknowledgments

This project has been made possible by a four-year research fellowship at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Art. I am most grateful for the generous funding and the opportunities provided by the institution's recognition of the value of interdisciplinary research. My colleagues at the Department of Architectural Design, Form and Colour Studies and the rest of the Faculty deserve many thanks for welcoming a historian in their midst and generously sharing their expertise and experiences on issues less immediate to the author.

I must express my deepest gratitude to my advisors Eivind Kasa and Per Østby for their inspiring enthusiasm, skilful guidance, sharp critique and valued friendship. Their willingness to take on a project off the beaten disciplinary track and their ability to see potential rather than problems in such a venture has been of vital importance. All along this long and winding road they have encouraged me and challenged me, always making me go the extra mile.

Through the years, many people have contributed to my understanding of the material presented in this dissertation. For rewarding discussions, pointed comments and pleasant conversations, I am indebted to Stig Kvaal, Finn Arne Jørgensen, Thomas Brandt, Ulla Angkjær Jørgensen, Hilde Berntsen, Kjersti Øverbø Schulte and several others at the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture, Center for Technology and Society, the Department of Product Design, and elsewhere.

Figgjo AS most kindly gave me unrestricted access to their company archive. I wish to thank everyone at Figgjo for all their hospitality and helpfulness, especially former CEO Per Arne Jensen, former design manager Olav Joa, designer Jens Olav Hetland and design manager Constance Gaard Kristiansen.

The NTNU Library has been an invaluable resource in my work. The expertise and expedience of its staff, especially the librarians at the Library for Architecture, Civil Engineering and Product Design, greatly aided my search for more or less obscure sources.

In acknowledgment of the direct impact Norwegian design itself has had on me and on the formation of this project, I also want to thank my Nobø *Type C* panel radiator designed by Herman Semmelmann in 1946 for keeping my office warm during long, cold winters, my Luxo *LI-P* task lamp designed by Jacob Jacobsen in 1937 (shade redesigned by Tom Valø in the late 1960s) for shedding the most flexible light on my work, my Håg *H05* office chair designed by Peter Opsvik AS in 1999 for excellent support through endless hours of reading and writing, and my Figgjo *Verde* coffee cup designed by Johan Verde in 1995 for a steady and stylish supply of stimulating elixir.

Finally, my most heartfelt thanks go to my wife Miriam for her infinite patience, endless support and steadfast encouragement. Her soundness of mind and warmth of heart never ceases to amaze me. This one's for you.

Thank you all!

Trondheim, June 2007
Kjetil Fallan

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	iii
Part I: Introduction	1
1 Introduction	3
1.1 Topic and scope	3
1.2 Sources	8
1.3 Demarcations	13
1.4 Structure	15
Part II: Theoretical Frameworks	19
2 Modernism or Modern ISMS?	21
2.1 Introduction	21
2.2 Modern, modernity, modernism	22
2.3 <i>Isms vs. epistemes</i>	25
2.4 Isms and the “essential tension” of ideology and practice	27
2.5 Isms as dynamic discourses	30
2.6 Reading isms	34
2.7 (R)evolution? Reassessing Kuhnian paradigms	37
2.8 Alternative paradigms and their different levels	41
2.9 (R)evolution? Paradigm(s)? Modernism(s)?	45
2.10 Modern ISMS	49
2.11 Conclusion	51
3 Historicising design, designing history	55
3.1 Introduction	55
3.2 The heritage from art history	58
3.3 Industrial design history	66
3.4 Design <i>history</i> or <i>design</i> history?	75
3.5 Material culture studies of industrial design history	83
3.6 Conclusion: A cultural history of industrial design	95
4 The Seamless Web of Socio-Design	101
4.1 Introduction	101
4.2 History of technology, SCOT and STS	102
4.3 Actor-Network Theory	110
4.4 Script	117
4.5 Domestication	126
4.6 Conclusion	136
Part III: Constructing Design Discourse	139
Introduction: Constructing Design Discourse	141
Section A: Setting the agenda	145
5 Forming a forum: Establishing the design magazine <i>Bonytt</i>	147
5.1 Introduction	147
5.2 Background: The Applied Art Association	148
5.3 The emergence of <i>Bonytt</i>	152
5.4 Seeing functionalism as an apolitical and ahistorical truth	158
5.5 “Decor in our time”	164
5.6 Mixing oil and water? Reconciling craft and industry	167
5.7 Conclusion	173
6 Forming a field, shaping a society: Design discourse and postwar reconstruction	175
6.1 Introduction	175
6.2 Putting a human face on modernism	176

6.3	The battle for hegemony: Who is the better designer?	182
6.4	New impressions—new horizons	188
6.5	Building the country: Design and reconstruction	192
6.6	Mass-production: Marvel or malady?	196
6.7	Stavanger Applied Art Association	203
6.8	Conclusion	206
Section B: Setting the table		207
7	Finding form: Establishing pottery production at Figgjo	209
7.1	Introduction	209
7.2	From Power to Pottery	209
7.3	Setting up shop: A pottery primer	212
7.4	Making business, making pottery, making do	214
7.5	Testing trends, finding forms	217
7.6	Conclusion	222
8	Forms in formation: New ambitions in pottery design	223
8.1	Introduction	223
8.2	Gearing up, going pro	223
8.3	Directing design: Ragnar Grimsrud	232
8.4	Conclusion	246
Conclusion: Constructing Design Discourse		247
Part IV: Negotiating Design Networks		251
Introduction: Negotiating Design Networks		253
Section A: Translations on the agenda		257
9	Expressive form, industrial form: Situating design in culture and commerce	259
9.1	Introduction	259
9.2	From social vocation to artistic expression	260
9.3	Responsible craft vs. experimental industry	265
9.4	Taking industry seriously	271
9.5	Conclusion	278
10	Foreign forms: Internationalising Norwegian design discourse	281
10.1	Introduction	281
10.2	Slowly stepping out	281
10.3	America—fears and desires	288
10.4	The revelation in Milan—or: selling art as design	300
10.5	Returning to Milan—or: selling design as science	307
10.6	Conclusion	312
11	Factory forms: Articulating the characteristics of industrial design	315
11.1	Introduction	315
11.2	Making room for compromise and pragmatism	316
11.3	The Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID-gruppen)	320
11.4	Mind the gap—handicrafts vs. industrial design	323
11.5	The distinctive power of the modernist aesthetic	330
11.6	Promoting the unaffected	335
11.7	Conclusion	341
Section B: Translations on the table		343
12	The formation of a factory: Figgjo's transition to industrial earthenware production	345
12.1	Introduction	345
12.2	From hen house handicraft to fordist factory	345
12.3	Materials, Man, Machine	352
12.4	Design strategy & management: "something for everyone"	361

12.5 Conclusion	368
13 Folksy forms: Designing for consumer consent	371
13.1 Introduction	371
13.2 Mundane meadows on standard shapes	371
13.3 Invented traditions and notional nostalgia	374
13.4 Coloured clay: credibility <i>and</i> commerciality	385
13.5 Conclusion	401
14 Forms of fancy: Towards a more discerning design practice	403
14.1 Introduction	403
14.2 Too modern? Failure and experiment	404
14.3 Hermann Bongard at Figgjo: Creativity on commission	411
14.4 Forced free trade: Figgjo and Norway towards EFTA	429
14.5 Conclusion	433
Conclusion: Negotiating Design Networks	435
Part V: Reconfiguring Design Cultures	439
Introduction: Reconfiguring Design Cultures	441
Section A: Clearing the agenda	449
15 Forming positions, framing practice: The fragmentation of the design field	451
15.1 Introduction	451
15.2 The ID-ing of I.D.	452
15.3 The “artification” of arts and craft	473
15.4 (Re)organize to professionalize	478
15.5 Conclusion	485
16 Form, fame, finesse and feelings: Aesthetic quality as reconciliation strategy	487
16.1 Introduction	487
16.2 The lingering desire for international fame	488
16.3 Insisting on the artistic aspects of design	495
16.4 Justifying “the need for cosiness”	507
16.5 The consumer: friend or foe?	512
16.6 Conclusion	516
17 (Re)forming message and medium: Radical design ideals, pliant design advice	519
17.1 Introduction	519
17.2 Design for the <i>real</i> world?	520
17.3 “We have teacups enough!”	530
17.4 <i>nye bonytt</i> : From fervent advocacy to friendly advise	535
17.5 Conclusion	541
Section B: Clearing the table	543
18 Forms of flexibility: Designing rational and fashionable tableware	545
18.1 Introduction	545
18.2 Redirecting product strategy: curtailment and cultivation	545
18.3 Fade to white: new basis for rational product differentiation	551
18.4 Conclusion	562
19 Festive forms: Decor design and emotive élan	565
19.1 Introduction	565
19.2 Domesticating modern models I: Folklorica	566
19.3 Domesticating modern models II: Rusticana & Psychedelia	574
19.4 Conclusion	583
20 Form, function fiction: Towards a new design practice	585
20.1 Introduction	585
20.2 Material morals: The virtues of vitreous china—Figgjo 3500	585

20.3 Trends taming technology: Renegotiating the 3500	597
20.4 Design as <i>scientific operationalism</i> : The otherness of 3500	603
20.5 Scientific operationalism by social osmosis?	610
20.6 Conclusion	617
Conclusion: Reconfiguring Design Cultures	619
Part VI: Summary and conclusions	625
21 Summary and conclusions	627
21.1 Introduction	627
21.2 Theoretical perspectives revisited	627
21.3 Constructing design discourse	634
21.4 Negotiating design networks	638
21.5 Reconfiguring design cultures	645
21.6 Conclusion: Modern Transformed	651
Sources	655
Bibliography	657

Part I:

Introduction

1 Introduction

“Everyday things represent the most overlooked knowledge... Quotidian things. If they weren’t important, we wouldn’t use such a gorgeous Latinate word. Say it,” he said.

“Quotidian.”

“An extraordinary word that suggests the depth and reach of the commonplace.”¹

These are the words of the stoic, wise old Jesuit priest Father Paulus in Don DeLillo’s 1997 novel *Underworld*. In all its simplicity, this statement epitomise the motivation behind this project. Throughout his epic account of the recent history of our modern world DeLillo lets the minute, mundane events and the grand, great narratives resonate in a proposal for an “underhistory”. And as the quote demonstrates, it is not only everyday *events* that rise to prominence in his philosophy of history; everyday *things* are just as essential to the understanding of our society and culture. To me, this little reflection on the importance of learning from quotidian things inspires the writing of a design history that recognises the extraordinary significance of the ordinary.

But what can quotidian things tell us about our culture and history, and how? Perhaps the most interesting aspect of industrial design as a field of historical inquiry is its many guises of inherent ambiguity, its “essential tension” between ideology and practice, between mind and matter, between culture and commerce, between production and consumption, between utility and symbol, between tradition and innovation, between the real and the ideal.

Looking at an advertisement for a product that will reemerge later in this study, the 1954 Figgjo *Sissel* earthenware service [Figure 1-1], may offer some initial clues as to the richness and complexity of meaning that pertains to the design of such ordinary objects. Detailed investigation will have to wait; suffice to say for the moment that many of the ambiguities mentioned above seem to loom large in this design. The design of everyday things can thus function as a lens, allowing us to better see some of the most prominent paradoxes of modern society and culture. Everyday products, the ideas that shaped them, and the meanings they mediate constitute a rich material and fertile ground for cultural history.

1.1 Topic and scope

This is a history of how industrial design culture was domesticated in Norway in the mid-twentieth century. Its primary ambition is to explore how ideas of what modern design was, could and should be were transformed over time between 1940 and 1970, in two

1. Don DeLillo, *Underworld* (New York: Scribner, 1997) p 542



Figure 1-1: Advertisement for the 1954 Figgjo *Sissel* earthenware service. The copy reads: “The housewife’s joy—the table’s adornment”. (Facsimile of advertisement in Figgjo archive)

sites: the national design community—articulated through the leading design magazine *Bonytt*—and the design strategies and practices of the ceramic tableware manufacturer Figgjo. As such, the dissertation is an attempt at writing a cultural history of industrial design, where design (as) culture is seen as a sort of dialectic or discourse between ideology and practice. This often uneasy relation between ideology and practice is the *leitmotif* of the study. This principle is derived from the American historian William Sewell Jr.’s conceptualisation of cultural change as a dialectic between system and practice (I will return to this discussion in Chapter 2).²

The ideas and ideals of what was considered good, modern design in mid-twentieth century Norway were partly inherited from the traditional applied art movement (*brukskunstbevegelsen*) and partly imported from various international currents of the so-called “modern movement”. But just as overt traditionalism was generally taboo, international avantgarde modernism now received criticism for being too “cold”, “inhuman” and “alien”. In addition to such concerns, the industry had to consider the saleability aspect; consumer taste was generally considered conservative, and modern design could thus often seem like a risky business. This means that in the Norwegian design discourse, past and foreign design ideology had to be “tamed”, or domesticated, in order to better suit the contemporary and local context. The national design community thus transformed these ideas and ideals through professional debate and public propaganda, here traced in the columns of *Bonytt*, and the manufacturing industry and its designers transformed them through their design strategies and practice, here traced in the documents and products of Figgjo.

This study will be not so much a history of objects and their designers, but more a history of the translations, transcriptions, transactions, transpositions and transformations that constitute the relations between things, people and ideas. In a sense, then, the questions that underpin and frame this study are, as phrased by the American cultural historian Bill Brown;

questions that ask less about the material effects of ideas and ideology than about the ideological and ideational effects of the material world and transformations of it. They are questions that ask not whether things are but what work they perform—questions, in fact, not about things themselves but about the subject-object relation in particular temporal and spatial contexts.³

Whereas Brown’s wording here might seem to imply something of a dichotomy in the causal connection between the “ideal” and the “real”, this study will emphasise the relational and reciprocal dynamics of idea and object, mind and matter, ideology and practice.

Brown’s last point, about the temporal and spatial particularity of the meaning of things, is of utmost importance to a history of design. The cultural contingency of design should need no elaborate explanation. Modernism is anything but static, but undergoes

2. William Sewell Jr., “The Concept(s) of Culture” in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999) p 47

3. Bill Brown, “Thing Theory” in Bill Brown (ed.), *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) p 7

continuous transformations, and the so-called “International Style” is not particularly international. To students of modernism in design, the mid-twentieth century constitutes a very interesting and rewarding period, as it encompasses quite comprehensive cultural changes over a relatively short time-span. Questions pertaining to this temporal context, i.e. the chronological demarcation of this study, will be discussed below. Regarding the spatial context, it should be unnecessary to justify the decision to study Norwegian design. Cultural history is sensitive to contextual variations in society, culture and nationality, and a history of Norwegian design is thus inevitably different from (although not incommensurable with) that of, say, Turkish design or even Swedish design.

Although this study is set in a national site or setting, I will not make a case for a particular “national style” of Norwegian design. The nation is a complex and contested unit but it nonetheless makes a viable arena for domestication processes. The mesh of cultural, social, political and economic configurations and codes that make up our society clearly contributes to maintaining the nation and the national as valid categories of demarcation and identity. I thus believe it is meaningful to discuss Norwegian design as distinct from that of other nations, but without striving to find some innate “Norwegian-ness” in its form.

However, it has been claimed that the home and its material constitution is particularly important in Norwegian culture. Explaining this claim by pointing to climatic circumstances has been repeated so often as to become more or less a truism. Whilst Mediterranean people live their lives mostly outdoors, the story goes, the long, cold, dark winters force us to spend so much time in our homes that they come to take on a significance.⁴ Even the Norwegian social anthropologist Marianne Gullestad does, to some extent, subscribe to the climate argument in her study of how young Norwegian women configure their social lives and identities around their homes, but nevertheless points to ideological concerns and symbolic values as far more important factors in understanding the centrality of the home in Norwegian culture:

As products and symbols of contemporary Norwegian culture the homes are perhaps more important than banks, insurance companies, and public buildings. The culture is home-centred, and the homes may perhaps invite a symbolic comparison with, let us say, the Gothic cathedral of medieval France. They are not comparable in terms of aesthetic quality and grandeur, but in terms of being among the central products and symbols of their cultures.⁵

Gullestad’s assertion is based on an ethnographic study from around 1980, but if she is correct, I would argue that her point is no less valid in 2005 or in 1955. Whatever the reason may be, there seems to be some truth to the claim that Norwegians are particularly concerned with their homes and interiors, something which should be taken into account when writing a history of Norwegian design.

4. The questionable logic of this argument is easily revealed by pointing out the very different home culture among traditional Inuit and Sami communities.

5. Marianne Gullestad, *Kitchen-table Society* [1984] (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001) p 110

Given this remarkable centrality of the home in Norwegian culture, it is hardly surprising that the domestic sphere to a large degree has been the dominant domain both in the professional design debate and in consumers' concerns with design. This focus also seems to be in line with the assertion by the American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and sociologist Eugene Rochberg-Halton that "the emotional integration of the home is concretely embodied in household objects."⁶ They recognise that many other types of objects also are important in people's lives, such as tools of the trade, cars, objects encountered in public space, etc. But, they continue;

one can argue that the home contains the most special objects: those that were selected by the person to attend to regularly or to have close at hand, that create permanence in the intimate life of a person, and therefore that are most involved in making up his or her identity.⁷

It follows that the design of such artefacts and the ideas that underpin them should be of great interest to historians.

In the context of the present study it is also interesting to note that among household objects in general, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton identified tableware as one of the most meaningful of all categories.⁸ Also, tableware was one of the favoured product categories in the mid-twentieth century Norwegian design discourse—both as illustrations of theoretical arguments, as exemplars of good (or bad) design, and as common tasks for designers. So, choosing a ceramic tableware factory as a case study might not be the most controversial decision, but it is a sensible one. And although design history is no stranger to tableware, a humble, run-of-the-mill enterprise such as Figgjo will represent something different. As the British design historian Jonathan Woodham has observed: "There has been comparatively little penetrating and substantive writing about twentieth-century industrial ceramics."⁹ Even less so, I would argue, if those focusing on famous brands and designers are subtracted. Still, my ambition is not to write a history of tableware or ceramic design, but to use the design practice at Figgjo and the design debates in *Bonytt* to better understand the development of mid-twentieth century Norwegian industrial design in general as cultural history.

Why all this talk about domesticity and household objects? Does not industrial design exceed this limited sphere of material culture and is not the failure to appreciate this one of the cardinal sins of design history? Yes indeed. But a historian is always to some extent a prisoner of his or her sources. My scope in this study is to investigate how modernist ideology was domesticated in design culture understood as debate and practice, and it would prove difficult to identify intellectual communities and arenas of debate engaged in these matters in mid-twentieth century Norway that did not have a heavy bias towards the domestic environment.

6. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things—Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) p 165

7. *Ibid.* p 17

8. *Ibid.* p 82

9. Jonathan Woodham, "Ceramic History" in Hazel Conway (ed.), *Design History—A Student's Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987) p 56

This study is a cultural history of modern design in Norway. It seeks to trace the domestication of industrial design culture in Norway over three decades. In order to reach a comprehensive understanding of the transformations that the ideas of what modern was and should be underwent in this setting, they need to be described and discussed at length and in depth, revealing the complexity of culture and dynamics of historical change. Contexts and nuances are essential in the interpretation of culture, a point which has been argued perhaps most prominently by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz and epitomised in his notion of *thick description*.¹⁰ So, the rather lengthy and detailed character of this study is warranted by the richness and multivalence of its subject matter.

With this little “disclaimer” about the scope and topic of this study, it is befitting to turn to a discussion of the primary source material upon which it is based.

1.2 Sources

“[T]hink of what a boon it will be to Czech historians of the future. The complete recorded lives of the Czech intelligentsia on file in the police archives! Do you know what effort literary historians have put into reconstructing in detail the sex lives of, say, Voltaire or Balzac or Tolstoy? No such problems with Czech writers. It’s all on tape. Every last sigh.”¹¹

Although Norway has been called “the last Soviet state”,¹² I have, as a Norwegian historian, not benefited from the situation here sarcastically outlined by the Czech author Milan Kundera in his critique of the dictatorial police control in his native country following the Prague Spring and the Soviet invasion in 1968. I have had to rely on more conventional sources.

As I have chosen to study a relatively long period of time and comprehensive field of inquiry with a vast multitude of potential sources, I have for the sake of researchability selected two distinct trajectories for the empirical investigations: the design magazine *Bonytt* and the ceramic tableware manufacturer Figgjo. Regarding the first of these trajectories, the magazine itself constitutes the primary source material. 30 volumes consisting of about 300 issues published during this period make up a rich and valuable source material of a consecutive order and consistent character. The second trajectory is primarily based on Figgjo’s company archive, which contains a wide variety of material.

10. Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 3-30

11. Milan Kundera, *The unbearable lightness of being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984) p 212

12. Believing that the microphones and cameras were turned off after a TV debate in September 1999 about the unsuccessful negotiations on a possible merger between the Norwegian telecom giant Telenor and its Swedish counterpart Telia, both with heavy state ownership, the Swedish Minister of Industry Björn Rosengren offered this now legendary characteristic of Norway.

I have, however, here focused on sources pertaining to the company's design strategies and design practice.

When studying the (trans)formation of, debate on and mediation of design ideology in mid-twentieth century Norway, *Bonytt* is more or less given as the major source. It was not just the leading design magazine—it was pretty much the only design magazine in Norway in this period. Thus, “everyone” in the design community read and related to *Bonytt*—at least the entire applied art community formed around the schools, museums and organisations, along with practising designers and some manufacturers. In addition, the magazine managed to reach a relatively large audience among the general public. Moreover, *Bonytt* was the official mouthpiece of the major design organisation, the National Association/Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen/forbundet Norsk Brukskunst) from 1947 to 1970 (and unofficially so from the very beginning in 1941).

This means that the ideas and ideals that were expressed in the columns of *Bonytt* had origins in, influence on and implications for much wider circles than the little group of editors/writers and their “congregation”. The intricacy of the network in which *Bonytt* was enmeshed can be illustrated by how the central actors were juggling a lot of different hats: The regular contributors counted representatives of the various organisations in the field, practising designers, business managers, shop owners, writers, journalists, educators, museum curators, etc. Some of the most avid actors wore three, four, or more of these hats simultaneously. They thus brought with them impulses from many different arenas (along with their different agendas) in their contributions to *Bonytt*. This intricate situation also meant that the ideology they helped form and transform in *Bonytt* got several outlets beyond the magazine's audience: One would meet these ideas and ideals as museum audience, as newspaper reader, as student, as consumer, as reader of advice literature, etc.

Such concerns about the magazine's background, context and networks are vital when assessing its status as source material. As the American historian of technology Eugene S. Ferguson observed in a discussion on the use of technical (trade) journals as sources:

In order to use those journals intelligently as historical sources, we should know what was on an editor's agenda, how his ideology influenced the words we read, what hobby or obsession or loyalty may stand behind the campaigns and crusades we encounter... The motives and purposes of editors (and publishers, when an editor was not also publisher) were varied and full of subtleties, but we can be sure that few editors saw their calling as merely a job to be done in order to collect a weekly pay envelope.¹³

Ferguson's point is not to discourage historians' use of this material, but to stress that the explicit programmes, the implicit ideologies and the more or less hidden agendas that

13. Eugene S. Ferguson, “Technical Journals and the History of Technology” in Stephen H. Cutcliffe and Robert C. Post (eds.), *In Context—History and the History of Technology* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 1989) p 67-68

underpin publications such as technical journals or design magazines must be duly factored in by the conscientious historian for them to become good sources.

Design magazines in general are receiving increased scholarly attention as important source material. Back in 1984 the British design historian Clive Dilnot wrote that

A history of the rise of the design journal as the vehicle for projecting the ideology or the value of “design” would be an enormous contribution to understanding the profession’s self-promotion of design values. To map the changing values, ideas and beliefs expressed or communicated in text and graphic layout could, in a sense, map the history of the professions. Is the history of design literally contained in the glossy pages of *Domus* or *Industrial Design*?¹⁴

Perhaps it is because Dilnot hid this intriguing remark in a footnote that this challenge seems to have been little acted on. Whereas it is my opinion that a “history of the professions” would require a far wider spectre of sources, I fully agree with Dilnot that design magazines such as *Bonytt* are vital sources in “understanding the profession’s self-promotion of design values.” This is precisely how I used the design magazine *Stile Industria* in my master thesis on 1950s’ Italian design,¹⁵ and also how I in the present study will use *Bonytt*.

To my knowledge, a comprehensive history of design magazines as called for by Dilnot is yet to be written. But his request for greater attention to their value as historical sources is slowly being responded to. The British design historian Grace Lees-Maffei has observed that arenas of design mediation, such as magazines and advice literature, recently have become valued as design historical sources because they provide the historian with a focus attentive to negotiations between the spheres of production and consumption.¹⁶ Likewise, in their introduction to a recent special issue of the *Journal of Design History* on the role of magazines in the making of the modern home, the British design historians Jeremy Aynsley and Francesca Berry argued that

Publishers [of interior design magazines] negotiated the intersection between manufacturers, retailers, designers and the consumer; they addressed the householder interested in matters of taste and decoration as well as providing specialized knowledge of the art and decorating professions.¹⁷

There are, in other words, many reasons why design magazines such as *Bonytt* are interesting and important historical sources, and most of them seem to hinge on the magazines’ unique position as a site of mediation, negotiation and domestication. To borrow a concept from the Dutch historian of technology Ruth Oldenziel (*et al.*), design

14. Clive Dilnot, “The State of Design History, Part II” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1984, p 19 (n 95)

15. Kjetil Fallan, *Shaping Sense—Italian post-war functionalistic design* [Master thesis] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2001)

16. Grace Lees-Maffei, “Studying Advice: Historiography, Methodology, Commentary, Bibliography” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2003 p 3

17. Jeremy Aynsley and Francesca Berry, “Introduction: Publishing the Modern Home—Magazines and the Domestic Interior 1870-1965” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2005 p 2

magazines comprise an excellent source for studying “the mediation junction”.¹⁸ The relevance and importance of *Bonytt* as a source should thus have been established.

In an essay on the pivotal role of the factory in modern society the Czech-Brazilian design critic and philosopher Vilém Flusser proposed that one can see “human history as the history of manufacturing and everything else as mere footnotes”.¹⁹ Without going to the same extremes as Flusser, this study does in a way follow his assertion that understanding industrial manufacture is essential in the writing of a history of modern society.

As already mentioned, the second strand of empirical inquiry will focus on the ceramic tableware manufacturer Figgjo. Using a manufacturing company as the focal point of a study is by no means a novel approach in design history. Many scholars have chronicled the histories of more or less famous companies renowned for their discerning use of design, or simply for their role as “patrons” of “great” designers. However, as the Italian design theoretician and historian Raimonda Riccini has argued, this tradition fails to adequately consider the economic and industrial factors of industrial design practice, such as business management, market strategies, production planning, manufacturing technology, product development. As a means to improving design history’s handling of these essential factors she calls for a closer intergration of design history and business history because, as she asserts; “the enterprise offers an ideal vantage point from which to understand the history of products and the profession of the industrial designer”.²⁰

This line of reasoning, paired with my interest in ordinary rather than extraordinary objects, led me to choose a company like Figgjo as a case study. It is not a company famous for innovative design, “great” designers or a contribution to the canon of design history. It is an ordinary company whose design strategies and design practice were steeped in pragmatic, everyday concerns, and whose products found their way into a great many kitchen cupboards but precious few museum showcases. On the other hand, as a ceramic tableware manufacturer, Figgjo might be classified as belonging to the sphere of “industrial art” alongside glass works, furniture makers, goldsmith companies, etc. Since this sector always has been overrepresented in design history, one might have preferred choosing a case study from a less charted industrial territory. But doing so could easily have resulted in a situation where the two trajectories of empirical inquiry would appear as two completely separate narratives with no interrelation, and thus failing to fill their function in this study. Just as it would be unwise to choose a company with too close ties to the national design elite, it would equally inadvisable to select one with no relation to the applied art community at all. It is the oscillating proximity and distance that comprises the dynamics of this setting.

The Figgjo strand of empirical inquiry is based predominantly on the company’s archive. Actually, “archive” might be a slightly misleading term. Figgjo does not have a

18. Ruth Oldenziel, Adri Albert de la Bruhèze and Onno de Wit, “Europe’s Mediation Junction: Technology and Consumer Society in the 20th Century” in *History and Technology*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2005, p 107

19. Vilém Flusser, “The Factory” in Vilém Flusser, *The Shape of Things—A Philosophy of Design* (London: Reaktion, 1999) p 44

20. Raimonda Riccini, “History From Things: Notes on the History of Industrial Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1998, p 44

proper archive in the customary meaning of the word. There are no organised files of documents neatly collected in cabinets or shelves. However, a lot of important historical source material does exist, heaped up in a corner of a factory building, and kept by the company seemingly with no end or purpose. Most of the material was collected for the short-lived and now dismantled company museum, but no archival or museum expertise was involved neither in the collection of the material nor in its subsequent handling. Not only is this situation worrying with regard to the future fate of the material, but it also makes it quite difficult to access, assess and utilise in historical research.

These problems and shortcomings notwithstanding, the company archive does contain much unique and highly valuable source material, albeit of a heterogeneous character. A large collection of Figgjo products spanning the entire period of investigation survives. In addition to these artifacts, the archive contains a motley collection of documents such as marketing material (brochures, catalogues and advertisements), press coverage (newspaper clippings), in-house information (company newsletters), communication with external parties (correspondence), management documents (consultancy reports, minutes from administration meetings, records of proceedings, etc.) and design documentation (sketches, drawings, photographs, minutes from design meetings, etc.).

Despite its utter disarray, the comprehensive collection of products kept by the company is a pre-eminent source of knowledge about the design practice at Figgjo. The use of artefacts as sources is often emphasised and encouraged in design history. To the British art and design historian John A. Walker, “hands-on” experience with artefacts is essential to design historians “because this almost always reveals information secondary sources such as photographs fail to communicate.”²¹ Simply visiting a museum will not do full justice to this decree, though. Because, as Walker continues, “since *function* is a key aspect of design, ideally goods should be *used* as well as scrutinized.”²² Similarly, the American design historian Jeffrey L. Meikle has explored the value of keeping the objects of study at hand while writing, “so I could touch and hold them, tap them with a fingernail, bend them, sometimes even break them.”²³ Being neither precious museum pieces nor expendable fleemarket paraphernalia, the Figgjo product collection provided me with invaluable “hands-on” experience with my study objects. I may not have eaten off the plates, and I certainly could not break them, but touching, feeling, holding, handling, manipulating, trying, testing and generally scrutinising the artefacts “up close and personal” surely makes for a new level of understanding when analysing their role in a history of industrial design.

Things, however, have a tendency of becoming more eloquent in the company of more conventional documentary sources. The American historians of technology Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery has argued that whereas artefacts are highly valuable sources, and generally have been underrated as such by historians, they are best used in conjunction with written documents and other types of more traditional source

21. John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989) p 5

22. *Ibid.*

23. Jeffrey L. Meikle, “Material Virtues: on the Ideal and the Real in Design History” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998, p 194

material.²⁴ This study conforms to such a line of reasoning, and will seek to produce history from both things and texts.

In addition to the uniqueness of the collection of products as sources, much of the documentary material mentioned above is of particularly great value. Catalogues provide a good survey of Figgjo's product portfolio and its development over time.²⁵ Brochures and advertisements tell of how the company sought to portray the image of itself and its products, and may also indicate how they imagined their consumers. Newspaper clippings supply a host of detailed information about the company in general and important events and developments throughout the period. Company newsletters offer a way to learn about the inner workings of the company. Surviving correspondence is relatively scarce and sporadic, but some of the remaining material has resulted in very interesting findings. The various kinds of management documents make it possible to peer "behind the scenes" by uncovering discussions and controversies in the company management. Finally, the design documentation, both in visual and written form, permits an intimate encounter with Figgjo's design strategies and design practice. Conjoined with the artefacts, these documents provide a good, albeit sometimes disparate, source base for writing a history of design as practiced at Figgjo.

1.3 Demarcations

A few remarks need to be made on the chronological demarkation. I have chosen to focus on the mid-twentieth century because this relatively short period of time encompasses quite comprehensive transformations both of the ideas, ideals, portrayals and practices of modern design as well as of society and culture at large. As a period it is, in short, an area of concentration well-suited to experience and study the dynamics of historical change at close hand. Some further notes should be made on my more exact delimitation of the period defined as the mid-twentieth century to the years (approximately) between 1940 and 1970.

Does it make any sense to study the 1940s as a more or less continuous period rather than seeing this decade as divided into two separate eras; the war years and the postwar years? The historian's eternal dilemma of continuity versus rupture strikes again. For generations of Norwegians, the dates April 9, 1940 (German invasion) and May 8, 1945 (capitulation) loom as giant schisms of "before" and "after". While acknowledging the extraordinary situation brought about by World War II, it is equally important to emphasize the fact that the world did not start from scratch at the end of the war. The empirical foci of this study are testimony to such an approach cautiously prioritizing continuity over rupture.

24. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, "Introduction" in Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (eds.), *History From Things—Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993) p ix

25. Raimonda Riccini has observed that catalogues "are a fundamental resource and one that has still been very little explored by the historiography of design": Riccini, *op.cit.* p 61 (n 10)

As we shall see in Part III, both the design magazine *Bonytt* and the ceramic tableware manufacturer Figgjo were founded in 1941, established and consolidated their activities in the midst of an occupied country at war, and continued their business along the same lines—although under significantly improved circumstances—after the war. Towards the end of the decade, when the worst (material) wounds caused by the war were healing, both *Bonytt* and Figgjo had “grown up” and established themselves as professional institutions to be reckoned with in their respective domains. This is why the period I have labeled “Constructing design discourse” spans the 1940s as a whole; war and peace.

It is not, however, just in the sphere of design that continuities can be traced through the war. For instance, the foundations for the welfare state that would develop after the war were laid in the latter half of the 1930s, following the social reforms introduced by the first long-lasting and stable Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet) government that came to power in 1935.²⁶ Nevertheless, the 1940s was an extraordinary decade, in Norway as it was in most parts of the world—chiefly because of World War II.

What about the upwards chronological demarkation; why can the mid-twentieth century be said to end around 1970? The historian’s conundrum of continuity versus rupture surely is at play here as well. Despite the ambitions of the more militant fractions of the political radicalism of the late 1960s and early 1970s, it is hard in retrospect to identify revolutionary changes in the society around 1970. But significant shifts did occur nonetheless. The postwar era of great political concord was drawing to an end in the 1960s. When this turbulent decade ended, the political landscape was severely radicalized and polarized, with a heated EEC debate, Cabinet crisis and the oil crisis waiting around the bend. The cultural radicalism of the late 1960s also included a growing criticism of the consumer society, something which also affected the design discourse.

As we shall see, around 1970, critical voices began questioning the role of design in an affluent society and market economy, calling for a new perspective on design and for radical design solutions to the more fundamental problems of this world. In a sense, then, the design discourse became more ideological than ever around 1970. But at the same time, the traditional applied art movement and its ideological underpinnings virtually disintegrated. The modernist mission lost its broad, unifying organisational base as the movement slowly fragmented and the various design sub-fields became more autonomous.²⁷ Furthermore, *Bonytt*, which hitherto had been an arena for professional

26. Berge Furre, *Norsk historie 1905-1990* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1992) p 146-169

27. The Norwegian design historian Fredrik Wildhagen has also identified a significant shift in the Norwegian design discourse around 1970, and argued that it was predominantly the result of a generational change among practitioners. Fredrik Wildhagen, “Formgivning for velferd” in Tormod Alnæs (ed.), *Vårt daglige miljø 1918-1978* (Oslo: Landsforbundet norsk brukskunst, 1978) p 18 and Fredrik Wildhagen, “Samarbeid og styrke—Nordisk formgivning i tiden etter verdenskrigen” in Hermann Bongard, Rolf Himberg-Larsen and Fredrik Wildhagen (eds.), *Nordisk kunsthåndverk og design* (Oslo: Landsforbundet norsk brukskunst, 1981) p 30-33. While this is clearly part of the equation, I believe there are several other elements that should be factored in as well, such as organisational work, industrial readjustment, increased consumption and general socio-cultural developments.

debate and utterly committed to the cause, was “secularised” and became a strictly commercial medium for friendly advice on interior decoration.

Most industrial design practitioners must be said to have continued performing their work somewhere between these two extremes. At Figgjo, for instance, it was business as usual. The company and its designers would continue to turn out teacups long after a design school teacher declared such products redundant in 1968. But of course it is not completely true that it was business as usual. The circumstances for the manufactured goods industry in Norway changed dramatically in the 1960s, primarily as a result of international free trade. Any company had to readjust to this new situation, both in terms of management, production and design. So, for Figgjo too, the late 1960s was a period of significant change—the most emblematic being the merger with their neighbor and major domestic competitor Stavangerflint in 1968/1969.

Rounding up this discussion on the demarcation of the study, it is interesting to note that the period I have chosen to study, 1940 to 1970, coincides exactly with the period that the Norwegian historian Francis Sejersted has dubbed “the social democracy’s happy moment”.²⁸ Without overdoing the comparison, one might be tempted to ask whether the same period also can be said to represent modern design’s “happy moment”?

1.4 Structure

Within this basic frame outlining the scope of the study, I have made use of a few organising concepts—implemented with rather modest rigidity—in order to help structure its contents. As in most historical research, there is a fundamental chronology in the material, so that the first empirical chapters pick up events in the early 1940s and the last empirical chapters leave them off around 1970. This timeframe is then sectioned in three parts or periods, each loosely corresponding to one of the three decades that are covered. In addition to this conventional approach, a different major structuring device runs through the material. As already mentioned, the empirical studies follow two paths/levels: the design ideology debated in and mediated through the trade magazine *Bonytt*, and the design strategy and practice developed by the ceramic tableware manufacturer Figgjo. These two empirical trajectories are pursued separately, and sections discussing each of the two are placed in alternating order within the chronologically structured parts. Parts III, IV and V thus each contain a Section A discussing design ideology and a Section B discussing design practice.

The time-honoured use of chronological structure requires little deliberation, as its pros and cons are tried and tested. However, my decision to section the period in three parts or periods, each loosely corresponding to a decade, warrants a brief comment. As the British art and design historian John A. Walker most poignantly has put it:

28. Francis Sejersted, *Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder—Norge og Sverige i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Pax, 2005) p 199-357 (“Sosialdemokratiets lykkelige øyeblikk”)

Units of time such as centuries used as the basis for histories are purely arbitrary impositions; the course of history does not alter just because the date changes. As a way of coping with the art, design and fashion of the twentieth century, a ‘decades’ approach has proved popular. Almost invariably ‘decades’ historians feel compelled to detect a style or spirit of the age in each decade whether there was one or not.²⁹

I can not emphasise strongly enough that the structure of this study is in no way the result of such a simplistic ‘neohegelianism in overdrive’. This is not a study of ‘the style of a decade’ (or three). Nor are the sections monolithic blocks of neatly defined ‘epochs’, but rather messy, partly overlapping and intersecting phases or modes in the study’s main narrative. If the three phases I have identified by and large coincide with the three decades covered by this study, it is because the empirical material reveals significant events and changes coalescing around the turns of decades. In this study, then, the more or less decadic system of structure emerges from empirical investigation rather than being imposed on the material *a priori*.

The other organising concept, the dual/alternating structure by theme/level/site, may require some consideration. This structure reflects the research perspective outlined above, where design (as) culture is seen as a sort of dialectic or discourse between ideology and practice, and design ideology is seen as subject to domestication in two levels/sites; the Norwegian design community and the design practice in manufacturing industry. The motivation, then, for moving back and forth between these two levels or sites throughout the text is to elucidate these dynamics of cultural change. However, such a dual/alternating structure may also have its problematic aspects. First of all, the ambition of pursuing two parallel narratives in one study might compromise its coherence and stringency. Of greater concern, though, is the question of to what degree the material chosen to explore the two trajectories in fact does illustrate the relations suggested by the research hypothesis. As will become clear, the two strands of investigation—the *Bonytt* discourse and the Figgjo practice—intersect, diverge, attune, conflict, pay attention and ignore each other on and off, to varying degrees, throughout the period under investigation. But it is precisely this ‘oscillating’ pertinence that makes it interesting: the combination of both discrepancies and correlations in the relationship between ideology and practice points to the nonlinearity and complexity of cultural transformation and historical change.

The topic, scope, demarcation and general structure of this study should now be fairly clear. However, as a means to enhance this picture, a brief presentation of the dissertation’s configuration is in order.

Design history as a field or discipline is a relatively recent phenomenon. Generally speaking, it must still be characterised as having reached only a quite modest degree of professional dispersion, organisation and institutionalisation. Whereas the field has achieved a certain degree of autonomy in some select places—notably Britain—there is still precious little “indigenous knowledge” available to those of us entering design history from more general or neighbouring disciplinary backgrounds. This is why I have found it both appropriate and necessary to allow ample space for the development of

29. Walker, *op.cit.* p 82-83

theoretical perspectives and frameworks as a way of positioning myself in the field. Thus, Part II of this dissertation is devoted to theoretical frameworks forming the basis for the ensuing empirical study.

Chapter 2 sets out to prepare the ground by discussing some basic epistemological questions related to the study of modern design. Primarily, it seeks to investigate the rather intangible notion of (modern) *isms* as categorising concept and analytic tool, and to develop an understanding of design ideologies as parts of cultural modes. Chapter 3 is a historiographic survey. First it presents a brief outline of the development of the field before discussing more in detail some major approaches in recent design history. Chapter 4 discusses some theoretical perspectives and methodological concepts appropriated from science and technology studies (STS) and how these might benefit a cultural history of industrial design.

The empirical investigations begin with Part III. This first phase has been dubbed *constructing design discourse* as it is characterised by entrepreneurship in both the ideological and the material sides of design discourse. Section A (Chapters 5 and 6) traces the first of these, from the establishment of the new design magazine *Bonytt* through its years of formation until the publication is firmly consolidated as the leading arena for professional debate in the Norwegian design community as reorganised after the war. While the design community and *Bonytt* were *setting the agenda*, Figgjo was *setting the table*. Section B (Chapters 7 and 8) traces the humble beginnings of the company and its pottery production and design, on through their preparations for the transition to larger scale industrial earthenware production.

Part IV comprises the second phase called *negotiating design networks* in recognition of the many different actors, interests and realms that were enrolled in the expanding design networks in this period of development and maintenance both in the design community and in industrial practice. Section A (Chapters 9, 10 and 11) discusses how negotiations between these different actors and interests put *translations on the agenda* in a design community at the height of its unity and strength in the 1950s. Section B (Chapters 12, 13 and 14) discusses how Figgjo in the same period, at their high as a domestic market earthenware factory, put many *translations on the table* in their efforts to mediate between the vast array of different, contradictory and incommensurable actors, interests and considerations involved in industrial design practice.

The last empiric phase of this study is laid out in Part V and identified as *reconfiguring design cultures*, denoting the processes of fragmentation, specialisation, reorientation and re-constellation that both the Norwegian design community as well as the manufacturing industry and design practice underwent in the 1960s. Section A (Chapters 15, 16 and 17) examines how the traditional applied art movement's universalistic approach to design encountered ever more resistance and various interest groups made different bids at *clearing the agenda* for a new order. Section B (Chapters 18, 19 and 20) examines how Figgjo devised and implemented strategies for reorganisation of their business model and reorientation of their design practice in order to cope with the brave, new world of international free trade.

This rather comprehensive and detailed study is then summed up in Part VI where Chapter 21 offers a summary that will briefly reconsider some of the theoretical

perspectives in light of the empirical material before trying to excerpt its major findings and suggesting a few concluding remarks.

Part II:

Theoretical Frameworks

2 Modernism or Modern *ISMS*?

2.1 Introduction

Thus far we have only hinted at the complexity and ambiguity inherent in concepts like modern, modernity and modernism. As these concepts are essential to any study of twentieth century design, an investigation of their structure and meaning beyond the colloquial and commonsensical is required. Terminological discussions are an important part of the epistemology and meta-theory of any academic discipline. This chapter will explore some questions arising when modern design culture is articulated as modernism.

In design studies there is an abundance of classifying and analytic terms which are often taken for granted. Of these, a surprisingly little explored but yet commonly used is the phenomenon of *isms*. In much architectural and design history literature, the nature of isms seems to be taken for granted and is rarely debated explicitly. As the Italian philosopher Omar Calabrese has pointed out, terms constructed as tools of classification, like isms generally are, are troublesome in that they often make use of key words designed to unify and connect their subject matter. But to function this way, these denominators have to be extremely simplifying and abstract, and thus become obstacles to any rewarding comprehension of history.¹

The significance of reflexive analysis of terminology has been receiving increased attention in the human and social sciences. Philosophers and social scientists have come to realize that the terms, concepts and categories they use to explain the social world can not be taken for granted, but should themselves be made objects of analysis. This is what the French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J. D. Wacquant call *reflexive sociology*.² This reflexivity is also a core component in the American sociologist Margaret R. Somers' proposed *historical sociology of concept formation*, alongside the *relationality* and the *historicity* of concepts:

A historical sociology of concept formation also requires a relational approach, for what appear to be autonomous concepts defined by a constellation of attributes are better conceived as shifting patterns of relationships that are contingently stabilized in sites... [C]oncepts... are products of their time and thus change accordingly... Understanding how concepts gain and lose their currency and legitimacy is a task that entails reconstructing their making, resonance, and contestedness over time... From the perspective of a historical sociology of concept formation, concepts do not have natures or essences; they have histories, networks, and narratives that can be subjected to historical and empirical investigation.³

1. Omar Calabrese, *L'età neobarocca* (Bari: Laterza, 1987) p 4-5

2. Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)

3. Margaret R. Somers, "The Privatization of Citizenship—How to Unthink a Knowledge Culture" in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999) p 133-135

Keeping this in mind and returning to the sphere of design studies, numerous questions spring to mind. What is an ism? In order to find out, we must explore how it is constructed, negotiated, mediated, consolidated and decomposed. How is an ism formed and then transformed? Is there room for negotiations and temporal changes? Isms are often portrayed as discrete entities, but experience still shows evidence of one ism encompassing other isms, overlapping each other, or even running parallel to each other. Are isms equivalent, comparable phenomena, or do they operate on different levels? We also need to examine the relations between isms describing systems of beliefs, or epistemes, and those describing aesthetic movements or design styles.

To undertake a fundamental critique of the (mis)use of these meta-terms is difficult. Comprehensive analysis of the core issues of design can hardly be achieved without using the terms and language of design discourse itself. In other words: we set out to discuss and criticise elements which are indispensable to design history. The task at hand, then, will be to reconstruct these elements of the language of design discourse in order to question and discuss the fundamental terms and notions of interest for further inquiry.

In the following I will discuss some of the above mentioned questions and their relevance to design history. First, we need a brief historical outline of the fundamental terms modern, modernity and modernism. This part is by no means any attempt to conduct a comprehensive investigation of this vast philosophical subject matter, but a brief outline is nevertheless essential as a backdrop for the subsequent discussion. Moreover, a clarification is required of the relation between isms as doctrines or aesthetic ideologies on the one hand and isms as world views or structures of society on the other. My main focus will then be to investigate the nature of isms as tools of classification and analysis, especially in the context of modernism and its etymologically derived isms. Based on this discussion I will suggest that an ism can be understood as a cultural mode defined by negotiations between design ideology and design practice—a notion that will underpin the rest of this study. Having established this understanding of modern isms as articulations of design culture and as decidedly dynamic discourses, I will then examine some of the problems and challenges posed by reading isms in the context of historical research. The latter part of this chapter shifts gear, so to speak, assessing the prospects of the concept of *paradigms*, as coined by the historian of science Thomas Kuhn and revised by Paul Feyerabend and Margaret Masterman, in framing the dynamics of historical change in design ideology and how it relates to the notion of isms. Concise answers to these questions are of course mere utopia, so my aim is rather to suggest a framework for further discussion.

2.2 Modern, modernity, modernism

Understanding 20th century design is inconceivable without somehow relating to modernism and its etymologically derived isms such as e.g. proto-modernism, late-modernism, post-modernism, neo-modernism, etc. All these ideologies and modes of

thought, and consequently the entire field of study, becomes tangible only after a closer examination of the stem of these terms—*modern*—even though, in the present context, such an etymological history can only be a rough and very brief outline.

The first known use of the term *modern* originates from a papal letter from 494 A.D. The adjective was used to distinguish the new decrees from the old. Even though the meaning of the word has varied and been used both as positive and negative descriptions of phenomena, persons and things, the fundamental understanding has always been dominated by the distinction between the new, the present and the former, the past.⁴ This understanding of the term prevails to this day, at least in quotidian parlance. To our ends, this understanding of *modern* is not very helpful, because of its time-relative character. It implies that all times has once been new, present, and hence *modern*. It is more or less synonymous with *contemporary*. What is *modern* today, will not be tomorrow.

A term derived from the adjective *modern*, is the noun *modernity*. The latter shows up in the French culture debate of the mid-nineteenth century, and is often connected to the poet Charles Baudelaire. He made it a key-word in his program for a new aesthetic. The term's time of conception is crucial to its understanding. The development in technology and science since the renaissance and the division of labour which followed the industrial revolution had resulted in a permanent change in the entire social life and a dissolution of traditional culture. Add to that population growth, urbanization, and the rapid development of communication and information infrastructure. In times like these, some elements of society and culture seem to prevail by means of tradition and conservative forces, while other elements tend to facilitate alterations through upheaval, innovation and instability.⁵

Baudelaire's visions of *modernity* are complex, and more often than not characterized by equivocations, sometimes even contradictions.⁶ According to one of his more enigmatic visions of *modernity*, the *modern aesthetic* is dual: On one hand, *modern art* contains an element of relativity regarding the epoch's fashion and distinguishing features. On the other hand, it contains an eternal, constant element of beauty. Baudelaire considered it the artist's task

to extract from fashion whatever element it may contain of poetry within history, to distil the eternal from the transitory... In short, for any 'modernity' to be worthy of one day taking its place as 'antiquity', it is necessary for the mysterious beauty which human life accidentally puts into it to be distilled from it.⁷

But *modernity's* concept of *novelty* is essentially different from what we today conceive as the ephemeral *novelty* of fashion.⁸ The latter is an abstract, discontinuous *novelty*,

-
4. Tore Eriksen, "Modernitet" in Knut Ove Eliassen and Thomas Brandt (eds.) *Maskinkultur – Utsnitt fra fabrikkens tidsalder* (Trondheim: NTNU/Fabrikken, 2001) p 60-61
 5. Arnfinn Bø-Rygg, *Modernisme, antimodernisme, postmodernisme – Kritiske streiftog i samtidens kunst og kunstteori* (Stavanger: Høgskolen i Stavanger, 1995) p 78
 6. For a concise and intelligible introduction to Baudelaire's many visions of *modernity*, see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air—The Experience of Modernity* (London & New York: Verso, 1983) p 131-171
 7. Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" [1863] in Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon, 1964) p 12-13

while the genuinely new and present which is strived for in Baudelaire's modernity always contains tradition – also when it takes form of negation. Because with fashion's change for change's sake, any substantial value is lost and any wish for true rupture is rendered impossible. Change as formal play seems to abolish the idea of progress which is embedded in the concept of modernity.

The Romanian literary historian Matei Calinescu identifies the existence of two distinct and at times contradicting modernities. The first is modernity as a rationale of society, or a field of experience – characterized by scientific and technological progress, the industrial revolution, and the enormous social and economic revolts which followed capitalism. The other is modernity as aesthetic concept.⁹

The first type of modernity is described by Calinescu as bourgeois and characterized by the doctrine of progress, faith in technology and science, pragmatism, and the idolizing of action and success. The other type of modernity he describes as anti-bourgeois and characterized by radical attitudes, the wish for a rupture with the established order, idealism, and a focus on the new role of art and culture. This dual concept of modernity becomes essential when discussing its manifestation in design, but a third related term—*modernism*—is the key conceptual entity, and requires an introduction.

There is a strong consensus that modernism describes an international tendency implemented in literature, music, theatre, painting, and other cultural spheres from the late nineteenth century onwards. The first known use of the term originates from the author Rubén Darío in the early 1890's. And it was within the Hispanic culture it first took shape of a large, relatively synchronized movement for aesthetic renovation.¹⁰ Modernism can be seen as a constant quest for modernity, or the wish to establish an anti-traditional tradition.¹¹

This is what has led many scholars to deem modernism an applicable term in historical analysis. Modernism, as opposed to modern and modernity, describes (although in a bafflingly vague manner) a movement or tendency which, it is often claimed, can be defined as an epoch in history and is thus not impaired by the constantly changing present. Because in modernism, the synonymy between *modern* and *contemporary* ceases. But here the consensus ends and the epistemological challenges pick up momentum.

Modernism is a surprisingly comprehensive and thus imprecise term. In architecture, for instance, it is used to describe practices as diverse as e.g. Spanish art nouveau and the world-wide suburban brutalism of the 1970s. In design, the ambiguity of modernism

8. It seems to me that Baudelaire viewed the novelty of fashion in a more general sense, like the aesthetics characterizing the present time. In the quotidian language of our day, the novelty of fashion seems to denote a much more frequent and haphazardly type of change. It has now also taken on a rather derogatory meaning which I suspect did not bias Baudelaire's use of the term.

9. Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987) p 41

10. *Ibid.* p 69

11. The Norwegian design historian Jan Michl has characterized one of the principal features of modernism as the "obligation to be modern" and asserts that "[t]he modernist idea of modernity... has nothing to do with choice.": Jan Michl, "Is there a duty to be modern?" in Anty Pansera (ed.), *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988) p 4-7

might be exemplified by pointing to the correspondence between the two opposed modernities identified by Calinescu and two of the most distinct directions of modernist design: North American *styling* or *streamlining* might be said to build on the pragmatic, progress-oriented type of modernity, while Central European *functionalism* might be said to build on the idealistic, radical type of modernity. Taken to extremes, these two design ideologies might even be labelled kitsch and avant-garde respectively.

To complicate matters even further, we should note that the meaning of the term differs considerably by variables such as geography, languages, and time. The *Modernismus* of 1920's Germany does not have the exact same meaning and content as the *Modernism* of 1960's USA. Acknowledging the polysemic but at the same time seemingly indispensable nature of the term has led the Spanish design historian Anna Calvera to assert that

Modernism, Modernist and Modernization are still sacred concepts for Design History, and arguably they are still potent instruments when researching a local reality, but we must also accept that they can change their meaning completely, depending on where and by whom they are used.¹²

Thus, the vagueness of the term notwithstanding, modernism is an important and adequate term, because it itself was an integral part of the items and cultural reality it is used to describe. The term participated in creating the history, and was not, like so many other comparable terms, created *post facto*.¹³

By virtue of its sheer impact on 20th century design, the term modernism can not be done away with. But due to its complexity and comprehensiveness, an adequate theoretical foundation and corresponding methodology is needed to tackle its appearance in situations subject to our analysis. I will return to some of the properties and characteristics of modernism in the next sections, within the discussion on that intriguing phenomenon called *isms*.

2.3 *Isms vs. epistemes*

Before any further investigation into the enigma of isms can take place, we need to make an important distinction. Some of the more comprehensive isms of the 20th century denote much more than “just” a more or less consistent set of aesthetic beliefs or styles. The most prominent ones I have in mind are modernism and post-modernism. These terms are used in a far more complex and far-reaching manner than e.g. cubism or neorationalism and by a far more comprehensive array of academic disciplines than studies of art, architecture and design. They are used extensively in e.g. philosophy, sociology, and history, where their meanings are normally constituted by factors of a

12. Anna Calvera, “Local, Regional, National, Global and Feedback: Several Issues To Be Faced With Constructing Regional Narratives” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2005 p 376-377

13. Bø-Rygg, *op.cit.* p 77

different or wider nature than within the aesthetic disciplines, although overlapping of course can be found. But it may seem as though we are faced with two phenomena of quite different scopes that share terminology. To avoid confusion, a closer definition of the two is needed.

When a philosopher or a historian uses the terms modernism or post-modernism he or she normally does not primarily refer to modes of aesthetic thought or artistic movements. What he has in mind is usually a much wider and profound socio-historical phenomenon—a system of beliefs, a world view, or an *episteme*. The French philosopher Michel Foucault sees these epistemes as society's structuring conditions, made up of discursive *formations* which are specific for any given epoch.¹⁴ What is possible to do and think at any given time is at the mercy of these underlying formations and their structure. He exemplifies by comparing the premises of 18th century science:

[T]he naturalists, economists, and grammarians employed the same rules to define the objects proper to their own study, to form their concepts, to build their theories. It is these rules of *formation*, which were never formulated in their own right, but are to be found only in wildly differing theories, concepts, and objects of study, that I have tried to reveal, by isolating, as their specific locus, a level that I have called, somewhat arbitrarily perhaps, archaeological.¹⁵ (my italics)

Foucault continues:

what I am attempting to bring to light is the epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge [...] manifests a history [...] of its *conditions of possibility* [...] Such an enterprise is not so much a history [...] as an 'archaeology'.¹⁶ (my italics)

So, by conducting an archaeology of science, Foucault contends, we may identify and understand the formations structuring the intellectual and creative achievements of different times and cultures. According to Foucault it is the episteme which both restricts and affords the discussive and visual possibilities of any given society. The modes and themes of discussion, appreciation, comprehension and thought are governed or facilitated by the episteme in force.¹⁷

14. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972) p 147-149, 193-194

15. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things—An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1st. Engl. ed. 1970] (London: Routledge, 1989) p xii

16. *Ibid.* p xxiii-xxiv

17. Since Michel Foucault's philosophy of history is a highly complex, comprehensive and controversial one, I find it opportune to clarify that I here deliberately limit my treatment of it to the discussion of his term *episteme* and its usefulness for my specific purposes in the present context. For an discussion of Foucault's disputed inspiration of and influence on academic historians see e.g. Jan Goldstein (ed.), *Foucault and Writing of History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), Allan Megill, "The Reception of Foucault by Historians" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 1987, p 117-141 and Patricia O'Brien, "Michel Foucault's History of Culture" in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1989) p 25-46. In a round of polemic "Foucault-bashing", the American political scientist and philosopher Marshall Berman has accused Foucault's ideas of being overly structuralist, rigid and totalitarian: "Foucault's totalities swallow up every facet of modern life. He develops these themes with obsessive relentlessness and, indeed, with sadistic flourishes, clamping his ideas down on his readers like iron bars, twisting each dialectic into our flesh like a new turn of the screw.": Berman, *op.cit.* p 35

In other words we are dealing with two different types of change which take place on different levels and in different contexts. The first type is the aesthetic-ideological movements or isms which shift relatively frequent and are said to supersede each other, the next seemingly revolutionary and utterly distinct from the prior. The second type is the epistemes—the deep, fundamental sociological structures and more lasting views and modes of thought and comprehension. From now on I will reserve the term *isms* to denote the first type of phenomena, and refer to the second type as *epistemes*. In the encounter with empirical realities this distinction will probably appear too dualistic and rigid, but at the present stage it might be a helpful conceptualization aid.

It is first when isms are reflected against their time's conventions, established rules and dominating debates, and their material manifestations in form of new art, architecture, and design become visible against the existing, that isms become apprehensible and feasible. The epoch's ever slowly changing episteme both restricts and affords what is possible to say, think, comprehend, and do at any given time. This is where the rules which constitute our actions come into being. Here, the situations in which our intentions are embedded arise. This is the background against which every new ism takes shape. Every ism is embedded in and dependent upon the episteme in force, whether it expresses celebration and exploration of the episteme's core values or rather rebellion and negation of the same.

2.4 *Isms* and the "essential tension" of ideology and practice

"Liberalism", "radicalism", "socialism", "conservatism", "individualism", "constitutionalism", "humanitarianism", "monarchism", "nationalism", "communism" and "capitalism". The American historians R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton have asserted that all these terms appeared in the English language between ca. 1820 and the 1840s. The very concept of isms is thus intimately linked with the history of modernity itself. According to Palmer and Colton, "[a]n 'ism'... can be defined as the conscious espousal of a doctrine in competition with other doctrines."¹⁸ This definition is very appealing in that it so clearly emphasises the co-existence and mutual presupposition of isms. On the other hand, as this definition seems to be concerned with the history of ideas in general, it may be too broad for the topic at hand, or perhaps just not detailed enough.

Art history, architectural history, design history and all other academic disciplines concerned with aesthetics or ideologies of form in one way or another, has no choice but to deal with the phenomenon of isms. Even historians of science and technology have to cope with isms, although in a somewhat different manner. But what are these creations? What do they include/exclude? How are they constructed? How do they develop? And how do we relate to them in historical research?

Colloquially, isms are often seen as theories (of art, architecture or design). Isms and theories might have some common denominators, but the two terms can hardly be

18. R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World* [8. ed.] (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995) p 464

considered synonymous. A (scientific) theory is normally defined as a logically and/or empirically based set of terms, methods and explanatory systems designed to structure or explain a given phenomenon. Bearing this definition in mind, it seems obvious that an ism can not be regarded as a theory.

First of all, isms differ very much from each other in terms of to what extent they promote a holistic view, an objective scope, a rational approach, and an empirical foundation. Some pretend to supply the answer to all the problems of the world and promise world peace and happiness for all, while some operate on a more internalistic and subjective level.

Secondly, isms are, more often than not, based on a compilation of (pseudo-) scientific and (pseudo-) philosophical fragments collected in order to act as indisputable facts in support of the ism. Thus, they can not be said to represent any holistic view or logically based system. The British design historian Peter Dormer has asserted that “[d]esigners and architects are especially good examples of people who depend upon elaborate justifications and meanings to give both purpose and structure to their work.”¹⁹ Isms may be seen as attempts as just that.

From these inquiries we may deduce that isms are not theories as this term was defined above, but rather, like the Swedish architectural theoretician Finn Werne proposes, ideologies.²⁰ They are more or less consistent sets of beliefs and arguments about what is correct, important and possible at the given time within the given episteme. Treating isms as ideologies instead of theories also facilitates the analysis by rendering their normative, doctrinaire, and relative nature more evident.

Moreover, isms are dogmatic, evangelistic, and programmatic by nature, and hence a far cry from the (alleged) objectivity of scientific theories. This is, of course, a too rigid and schematic outline. Even though scientific theories often—at least colloquially—pass for objective systems of logic, much recent research in the field of science and technology studies has convincingly argued that theories (facts) can to a considerable degree be considered results of co-construction in the same way as artefacts are.²¹

We are now at what I believe to be the core of the nature of isms: they are normative. Their normative character is quite obvious. They tend to propose or dictate how art/architecture/design *should* be. While theories are structural or explanatory—i.e. pretend to tell us how things *are*, isms preach the gospel of how things *should* be. This important property poses fundamental challenges for research into the domain of isms. I will return to this problem below.

The Danish architectural theoretician Erik Nygaard has also pointed out these normative, dogmatic and evangelistic functions within the field of architectural theory,

19. Peter Dormer, *The Meanings of Modern Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990) p 106

20. Finn Werne, *Arkitekturens ismer* (Stockholm: Arkitektur Förlag, 1998) p 124

21. For a discussion of the complex nature of science and scientific theories and how they are not objective representations of the world, see e.g.: Michel Callon, John Law and Arie Rip (eds.), *Mapping the Dynamics of Science and Technology—Sociology of Science in the Real World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986) and Peter Galison, *How Experiments End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). For an assessment of the troublesome relativistic implications of extreme versions of the social constructivist approach see e.g.: Margaret C. Jacob, “Science Studies after Social Construction—The Turn toward the Comparative and the Global” in Bonnell and Hunt (eds.), *op.cit.* p 95-120

but without abandoning the term theory like I suggest to do in this context for the sake of terminological intelligibility. He has, however, tried to diversify and distinguish between different types or levels of theories—identifying a field consisting of manifestoes, architectural theory, and architectural science, flanked with architectural criticism and history.²² This is an important distinction which can help improve the tangibility and level of precision in the history of ideas. But because the construction of design ideologies, just like that of artefacts and scientific theories, is a collective action, they are transformed over time. Isms can not be comprehended by studying exclusively their origin and what is commonly perceived to be their authors, because their fate really is in the hands of future mediators and users.²³ And in order to cope with this flexible and dynamic nature of isms, we need additional theoretical frameworks and methodological tools.

As a prolongation of its normative nature, isms are highly pragmatic, or instrumental. Not only do they suggest how things should be, they normally also supply the methods with which to achieve the desired state. This instrumentalism gives isms a dualistic character. An ism may be considered a set of properties common to a body of buildings or artefacts—i.e. a *style*, a practice of designing. Or, it can be considered an ideological superstructure which in turn evokes buildings or artefacts more or less corresponding to the ideology.²⁴ The most common and rewarding stand to take is somewhere in between these two. An ism can, as shown above, be characterized as an ideology. But it can not consolidate, develop, transform, or be preserved without the active participation of the buildings or artefacts in question as well as human actors. Isms are thus taking the form of systems consisting of complex actor networks, and should be treated as such.

This dualistic character of isms as ideology and isms as style invokes a similar and, I would argue, parallel dualism or controversy in the field of general cultural studies—the often perceived incompatibility of culture seen as a system of symbols and culture seen as practice. The American historian William Sewell Jr. has tried to overcome this obstacle by arguing that culture is most fruitfully conceptualized as a dialectic between system and practice and insisting on a necessary tension between the two as the key to understanding cultural transformation and development:

System and practice are complementary concepts: each presupposes the other. To engage in cultural practice means to utilize existing cultural symbols to accomplish some end. The employment of a symbol can be expected to accomplish a particular goal only because the symbols have more or less determinate meanings—meanings specified by their systematically structured relations to other symbols. Hence practice implies system. But it is equally true that the system has no existence apart from the succession of practices that instantiate, reproduce, or—most interestingly—transform it. Hence system implies practice. System and practice constitute an indissoluble duality or dialectic.²⁵

22. Erik Nygaard, “Arkitekturteorien—mellem manifeste og videnskab” in *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2002, p 41

23. Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) p 29

24. In fact, to escape the somewhat tainted reputation of the word “style”, the Greek art historian Nicos Hadjinicolaou suggested to replace it with the term “visual ideology”: Nicos Hadjinicolaou, *Art History and Class Struggle* (London: Pluto, 1978) p 104

25. William Sewell Jr., “The Concept(s) of Culture” in Bonnell and Hunt (eds.), *op.cit.* p 47

This position again, draws our attention to the relation between ideology and practice in design. Sewell's suggestion to emphasize the tense dialectic negotiation between system and practice in order to conceptualize the development and transformation of culture can function as a starting point. If we substitute "ideology" for Sewell's "system of symbols", we are presented with an intriguing model for understanding the dualistic character of isms: I will propose here that isms can be seen as cultural modes. It follows, then, that the culture of design—as experienced and articulated through isms—is most fruitfully conceptualized as a dialectic between ideology and practice. This tenet is the *leitmotif* of this study, as will become clear later on.

The discrepancy between ideology and practice is an intriguing phenomenon that poses interesting questions not only in terms of design history in general, but also regarding the topic at hand: the formation and transformation of isms. (e.g. the role and nature of *canon*). This fascinating and intricate relation deserves far more attention than what is feasible here. But I will suggest that there is a transitional aspect to this relation—an ism as a style can hardly exist until an ism as an ideology has been proposed and to a certain extent disseminated.

2.5 *Ism*s as dynamic discourses

Another core property of isms is their contemporary connection. Isms are products of the time, society and episteme they arise in. An ism is formed as a response or reaction to the existing praxis and governing ideas within the prevalent episteme. In other words, a new ism depends on both contemporary society and history. The episteme in force poses restrictions and affordances on what is possible to think, mean, say and do at any given time, and thus also on the nature of the ism under formation. But we must not forget that this relation is reciprocal—the isms in their turn are part of the ever continuous development of society and episteme.

A striking characteristic of many—if not all—isms is their claim of novelty and revolution. Although both arguments, methods and rhetoric differ vastly, an ism arises from the believed need for an abolition, or at least a thorough revision of the old and existing order in favour of a brand new order more in step with present beliefs and ideas. But this claim of novelty often appears to be static. Due to the normative and programmatic nature of isms, they tend to legitimize the need for revolution which they proclaim by passing judgement on history and contemporary society in a remarkably prejudiced manner.²⁶ The old and existing order is seen as a static, monolithic entity, and so is—strangely enough—the new envisioned order as well. But the rhetoric notwithstanding, any new ism is always a change of the existing order and always change in relation to the existing order.

26. The remarkable degree to which this process resembles any sort of sociocultural youth quake (e.g. beatniks, hippies, punks, etc.) in that it is *generational* is described in: David Pye, *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1978) p 134

This is also a reason why revivalist isms like neoclassicism or neomodernism never are just replicas of the original, referred isms. Any neo-ism arises in a time, society and episteme vastly different from the original and must therefore be of a completely different nature and based on an ideological foundation which may even be in direct conflict with that of the referred ism. The prefix neo implies historic revival. Neomodernism is thus based on a revival of or at least an *hommage* to an earlier ism. The pioneers of modernism would never have accepted such a thought. To modernist missionaries neomodernists would be thoroughbred heretics.

Isms are highly dynamic configurations; they change according to time and space. Like any other social phenomena, they undergo changes and develop constantly from their conception to their eventual passing, and also through their crusades through different regions and societies. Christian religion is not the same in ancient Rome as in tv-evangelized Hollywood. Nor was modernist design the same at the 1939 New York World's Fair, *Building The World of Tomorrow*, as at the 1968 exhibition *XIV Triennale di Milano*. This transformation takes place through a process of negotiation between all the involved actors. It is also a part of the change society at large undergoes restlessly, and it all develops in an intertwined relation to the episteme in force.

In this sense, an ism may resemble a Bakhtinian discourse. The American historian Sonya O. Rose draws upon the Russian linguist M. M. Bakhtin when suggesting that

discourse is produced in an unending process of recuperation and transformation... Yet each recuperation creates something that was not there before: its meanings are the product of a particular conjuncture. Discourses are embedded in contemporaneous networks of meanings and social relationships, with their own histories of transformation.²⁷

Although most isms of architecture and design probably are less erratic, periodic and changeable than the moral discourses which are Rose's subject of analysis—such as public apprehension about women's sexual morality—her reflections on the nature of cultural transformation and how it should be analysed certainly are relevant to the topic at hand, indicating the dialectic and dynamic character of any socially embedded cultural phenomenon—such as isms.

But how and where does an ism arise? There is a dogma claiming that art is created in the studio, while isms are created in the galleries. Whether the first part of this assertion is true for fine arts is out of my scope, but it is in my view certainly not true for industrial design. Art has traditionally been seen as relatively autonomous—although this myth has been challenged lately with reference to the artist's relations to markets, conventions, institutions, etc. Industrial design, on the other hand, is far from autonomous—the creative process is entangled by such an array of actors with different agendas as to prevent any notion of autonomous “studio creation”. But the second part of the assertion—isms are created in the galleries—is interesting if we interpret galleries in a broad sense. By galleries, we should understand the network of social institutions, actors,

27. Sonya O. Rose, “Cultural Analysis and Moral Discourses—Episodes, Continuities, and Transformations” in Bonnell and Hunt (eds.), *op.cit.* p 228-229

and mechanisms involved in the socio-cultural reception, interpretation, and domestication of art, buildings, and products.

It is only when an array of actors agree on attributing a more or less consistent set of properties and qualities to a group, school or generation that an ism is constituted. These actors can be, in addition to the artists, architects and designers themselves, gallery owners, commissionaires, cultural critics, journalists, writers, editors, academics, and many others. In some cases, the artists, architects or designers who are assigned to an ism by this powerful actor network themselves flat out refuse to be associated with the ism constructed for them or on their behalf.

After the initial, struggling phase, the new ism is either fought off and marginalized or it is accepted by a sufficiently large community so that it can flourish. In both cases it takes its place in history, either at the junk yard of ideologies and forgotten intentions, or at the centre court of society's ideological entrepreneurs. But since all new isms are so closely tied to the *Zeitgeist* of their own times, they are also doomed to become *passé* sooner or later. This is rather intriguing considering the fact that every new ism must insist on its own novel, ground breaking character at the expense of the existing order's wrong, obsolete arguments in order to succeed. But even the most revolutionary ism eventually loses its provocative abilities and becomes tradition. The most striking example of this paradox is probably the proliferation of functionalism during the interwar years commented on in 1965 by Theodor Adorno in the most severe manner; "the absolute rejection of style becomes style."²⁸

In order to explain this transition of an ism from avant-garde to mainstream tendency or forgotten obscurity, Finn Werne uses the terms intentional context and extentional context. By extentional context he refers to a project's relation to the world at large, to the governing episteme of the time. By intentional context he refers to a project's relation to the architect's world of ideas, to his will to novelty. He elaborates:

The type of intention I speak of here reveals itself through deviation, both in discursive and in visible form, from what is generally accepted at a given time. The extentional reveals itself through the common, the accepted, through use, custom and tradition, while the intentional reveals itself through the special, the novel, the diverging and marginal.²⁹

Werne then ties the extentional context to the term *style* and the intentional to isms. A style refers to a certain part of the extentional context, to an already established ism which serves as legitimatizing identity for the project. But the ephemeral character of the avant garde necessitates a transitional process:

The ism is thus characterized, more or less, by a number of criteria which are specific for a particular complex of ideas which only *during a relatively limited period* can remain

28. Theodor Adorno, "Functionalism Today" [essay presented to the Deutscher Werkbund conference in 1965] reprinted in Neil Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997) p 10

29. Werne, *op.cit.* p 27 ("Den form av intention jag talar om här visar sig både i det diskursiva och i det synliga avvikelse från det som är vedertaget vid en viss tid. Det extentionella visar sig i det allmänna, det vedertagna, i bruket, i skicket och i traditionen, medan det intentionella visar sig i det speciella, i det nya, i det avvikande och marginella.")

intentional but which subsequently transforms into an extentional context as the ideas win general approval, become what we call general knowledge, or are passed on to history's eternal oblivion of lost and forgotten intentions.³⁰

This part of Werne's argument is interesting because it points to a crucial, but little examined property of isms—the inexorable transformation of ideology as it moves through society. Avant garde isms tend to become conservative styles even when their most prominent and powerful arguments are based on the rejection of such a development. The pioneer revolutionaries of a movement soon enough become the reactionary clergy condemning any development of the isms which exceed or transcend their own original intentions.

The proposition of isms as changing entities is a strong and useful one. It can also, I believe, successfully be extended to follow the ism's further development. An ism is not consolidated and homogenized once it has lost its avant garde status and is disseminated as the prevalent ideology. An ism never stops changing. It is therefore of great importance to study how an ism develops after it has passed through the (partial) transition from intentional to extentional, from avant-garde to arrière-garde, from ideology to style. This development should be seen as a reciprocal process of domestication, where society and the actor network forms and transforms the ism, and the ism forms and transforms society and the actors. Society does not consist of a continuous row of avant garde intentions. Thus by analysing an ism's coming of age, and not exclusively its origin and conception, we might gain important, new knowledge we would otherwise miss out on.

These questions regarding the construction of categories for analytical purposes—such as isms—are of course not restricted to the realm of design studies. Any historical or existential description and comprehension seems to be structured in such a manner. We can conceive of light without darkness no more than of formalism without functionalism. One concept or category overlaps or supplements the other, making any complete or pure identity impossible. This concept of supplementarity, as coined by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, has been adopted and developed by the American historian of ideas Dominick LaCapra who stresses the importance of acknowledging and highlighting this problem in the writing of history:

Supplementarity reveals why analytic distinctions necessarily overlap in 'reality', and why it is misleading to take them as dichotomous categories. Analytic or polar opposites always leave a problematic difference or remainder for which they do not fully account... Analysis provides clear and distinct ideas which define boundaries and confine ambiguity or overlap to marginal, borderline cases. Insofar as analysis define polar opposites, it constructs ideal types or heuristic fictions.³¹

30. *Ibid.* p 28 (“Ismen karakteriseras då, mer eller mindre, av en mängd kännetecken som är specifika för ett särskilt idékomplex som endast *under en relativt begränsad tid* kan förbli intentionellt men som successivt övergår i ett extentionellt sammanhang efterhand som idéerna antingen vinner allmänt erkännande, blir vad vi brukar kalla allmänngods eller förpassas till historiens oändliga gömmor av förlorade och bortkomna intentioner.”)

31. Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History—Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) p 152

LaCapra does not suggest any easy answer, but points to a precarious problem: how can we conceptualise, describe, analyse and discuss past cultures and societies—in short; write history—without lapsing into static simplifications or unsubstantial fiction? The American historian Lloyd S. Kramer has, in his reading of LaCapra, suggested that

this... does not mean that historians can or should abandon all categories or all desire for systematic distinctions, [but] it does suggest that they should give far more attention to the ways in which their categories overlap and contest one another. The problem, of course, is to find a method for writing history that would convey the complexity of overlapping categories without abandoning analytic distinctions and therefore passing into complete obscurity and confusion.³²

It might be advantageous, then, to challenge the conventional use of analytical categories and develop strategies for uncovering and emphasizing the overlapping, contesting and supplementary character of e.g. isms.

It should now be clear that isms are far more complex and dynamic phenomena than they are sometimes portrayed as. In addition to the issues under discussion here, the biggest problem in my opinion is that the varying nature of the different isms make it difficult, if not impossible to relate to extensive, holistic isms like e.g. modernism in the same way as to more particular, narrow isms like e.g. neorationalism. But if we are aware of this challenge, we are much better equipped to search for its solution.

2.6 Reading *isms*

Design history, at least in its traditional form, has at times been accused of resembling the writing of myths. It is my belief that this problem can be attributed partly to the mythical character which has been assigned to the phenomenon currently under discussion; isms. The origin of this mythical character of isms can be found in the texts which—together with the canonized works—constitute the primary sources of knowledge on the isms' nature for historical research. As the Swedish and American historians of technology Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison argue, historians often contribute to the proliferation and reinforcement of myths by not scrutinising their sources sufficiently—the historian is taken hostage by the sources. In many cases the historian adopts the actors' self-perception as embedded in the sources and pass it on without yielding it enough resistance. The problem here is, of course, that the resulting historical narrative becomes little more than a reproduction of the actors' own mythopoeic accounts.³³ This is exactly what has happened in much conventional design history, especially in works chronicling the Great Narrative of Modernism.³⁴ As the German design historian Rainer Wick has put it:

32. Lloyd S. Kramer, "Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra" in Hunt (ed.), *op.cit.* p 113

33. Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison, *Hubris and Hybrids—A Cultural History of Technology and Science* (New York: Routledge, 2005) p 205-206 & 294-307

Design history will... have to accept the suspicion and the reproach of being unscientific as long as it trusts historical sources blindly without taking the instrument of source-criticism into account³⁵

Of course, much has changed to the better in the historiography of design in the twenty years that have passed since Wick issued this warning, but it is still a useful and poignant reminder.³⁶

When approaching the phenomenon of an ism, or more precisely the texts embedded in it and the texts describing/explaining/interpreting it, one also immediately comes across the insider/outsider problem. By texts embedded in a given ism, I mean texts which are contemporary with the ism at hand and which take part in the construction and consolidation of it, or—if of negative nature—form antiprograms to it. The remarkable preoccupation with ideology reflected by this text production has been sought explained by the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard as a means of simplification: “It is the abstract coherence, suturing all contradictions and divisions, that gives ideology its power of fascination“.³⁷

The most common examples of such texts are manifestos, magazine and newspaper articles, programmes, exhibition catalogues, etc.—all more or less programmatic and evangelistic in form and content. Such texts are most prominent in the initial stages of an ism when architects and designers oppose conventional practise and must seize the pen in order to express their beliefs. The most famous examples of such texts are probably the early modernist manifestos, which the British architectural historian Peter Collins has described as “pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo”.³⁸ (Based on the modernists’ fascination for science and technology.) Finn Werne proposes a paraphrase of Collins to characterise the equally hazy post-modernist writings; “*pseudo-philosophic mumbo-jumbo*”.³⁹ (Based on the post-modernists’ fascination for philosophy.)

These texts and their authors are often leading actors in the formation of an ism, and their roles and performances are for the most part vigorously polemic and flamboyant,

34. Sometimes this mythopoeia is further enhanced by social and personal relations between actors and historians. For instance, the British design historian Jonathan M. Woodham has shown how “[s]uch close-knit inter-relationships of campaigners, critics and historians have done much to perpetuate a very partial view of British design between the wars.”: Jonathan M. Woodham, “British modernism between the wars: an historical ‘Léger de main’?” in Pansera (ed.), *op.cit.* p 8

35. Rainer Wick, “Critical observations and general remarks about design history” in Pansera (ed.), *op.cit.* p 44

36. A good example of mythoclasm that is of particular interest to Norwegians is Henry Petroski’s study of the early history of the paper clip. According to Norwegian lore, the paper clip was invented by Johan Vaaler who was granted a patent for a paper clip in Germany in 1899 and in the USA in 1901. But as Petroski has effectively shown, there were at the time several other paper clips patented and manufactured in the USA before Vaaler’s, and the most emblematic paper clip design—the type know as the “Gem”—was never patented but existed already in 1899: Henry Petroski, *The Evolution of Useful Things* [Org. publ. 1992] (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) p 60-69. Although the dubiousness of Vaaler’s unique authorship of the paper clip is quite well known, the tenacity of this myth—at least in Norway—is remarkable. This is due partly to the symbolic use to which the paper clip was put during the World War II German occupation of Norway when the unassuming artefact by patriots was worn on coats like a discreet and subtle badge to symbolize nationalism and unity (a (supposedly) Norwegian invention designed to hold something together). See e.g.: Nanna Segelcke, *Made in Norway* (Oslo: Dreyer, 1990) p 61

37. Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* [1972] (St. Louis, Mont.: Telos, 1981) p 101

38. Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture: 1750-1950* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965) p 293

39. Werne, *op.cit.* p 24-25

and their stand in the drama is either that of believer or nonbeliever, avant-garde or arrière-garde. I find the theatrical, religious and military metaphors utterly suitable here. The debates are often staged much like a play; the actors act their parts with dramatic gestures and intense pathos. Or they are played out like wars or battles where military strategists and warriors fight for the cause, strive to defeat their enemy and conquer the world. Also, most isms are surprisingly similar in structure to religions. You will find priests, congregations, Scriptures, relics, missionaries, pilgrimages, crusades and the lot in any self-respecting ism.

These actors/missionaries/warriors and texts/relics/weapons are fundamental keys to understanding isms as sociological, cultural, aesthetic, historical and philosophical phenomena. But the above mentioned is extremely important to bear in mind in our interpretations: The embedded texts can be dangerously alluring, deceitful and misleading if read out of context and without proper analytic reflection.

This contemporary believer/nonbeliever dichotomy is one aspect of the insider/outsider problem. Another intriguing aspect of it is found in the texts describing/explaining/interpreting isms historically. Here, the believer/nonbeliever dichotomy fuels heavily biased writings on isms which often take form as chronicles, falsifying or legitimatizing history. The historiography of architecture and design in general and of modernism in particular is saturated with such writings. Believers of modernism, such as Nikolaus Pevsner and Sigfried Giedion have in elaborate and ingenious ways tried to show and explain the unavoidable victory of modernism, albeit from vastly different origins.⁴⁰ Nonbelievers like Charles Jencks and Robert Venturi, on the other hand, have tried fiercely to discredit and dismantle modernism with the same, but opposite directed, strategy—arguments based on historical necessity, determinism and teleology.⁴¹

These approaches all share a methodological problem: They seem to be based on a static, contemporary (with the author) notion of the idea they set out to analyse (in this case modernism), and extrapolate backwards in time grasping at fragments of data that can confirm their predetermined views and thus legitimize or falsify the idea. The unscientific nature and biased outcome of this kind of history has long been common knowledge within the realm of general historiography. The Greek architectural historian Panayotis Tournikiotis has made a timely and intriguing contribution to the transfer of this critique to the field of architectural historiography.⁴² His mapping and critique of the long tradition of writing genealogic, projecting, deterministic architectural history is important as a potential corrective in the further development of this field of studies.⁴³

40. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design—From William Morris to Walter Gropius* [2. ed.] (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949) and Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The growth of a new tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford University Press, 1949) For a historiographic analysis of Pevsner's work, see: Peter Draper (ed.), *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)

41. Charles A. Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1977) and Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966). Here it is interesting to note a very specific link between the great chronicler of Modernism and the great chronicler of Post-Modernism: Jencks did his PhD under the supervision of Reyner Banham—who did his PhD under the supervision of Pevsner: Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2002) p 365

42. Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999)

But though he patently shows how the writing of history is subject to the same transformative processes as any other cultural phenomena, even Tournikiotis regards modernism as a “relatively immobile object”.⁴⁴

This seems to indicate that there is still a lack of room for or will to a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of modernism, although recent design history has begun exploring this exciting territory. The ism has often been sealed, homogenized and generalized, with little room for exploring contradictions, politics, contingencies and efficacies. It has been turned into what the French sociologist Bruno Latour describes as a black box; an impenetrable and unintelligible unit.⁴⁵ In order to understand the inner workings and dynamics of the ism, the black box has to be re-opened and examined. The black-boxing of isms also turns these ideologies into myths.⁴⁶ This problem has been raised and debated within the history of ideas, with Quentin Skinner as one of the chief critics.⁴⁷ And, as the British design historian Clive Dilnot has pointed out, it is high time to rid design history as well of the writing of myths.⁴⁸ The danger is, of course, as Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison caution, that such a catharsis may also result in new myths. Writing alternative histories does not necessarily solve the problem if they make use of the same emplotments and story lines as the traditional mythical narratives.⁴⁹

Thus far, this chapter has investigated the nature of isms as tools of classification and analysis “from within”. The discussion has centred on the conception of isms as cultural modes characterized by negotiations between design ideology and design practice, as well as on their properties as dynamic discourses. The latter half of this chapter will approach these issues from a different perspective, exploring the prospects of Kuhnian paradigms in framing the dynamics of historical change in design ideology.

2.7 (R)evolution? Reassessing Kuhnian paradigms

The history and philosophy of science has long been pondering how science develops and how to explain what we normally call scientific progress. Is science cumulative or sequential? Is absolute truth and knowledge an impossibility or merely a matter of time and effort? One of the most influential contributions to this debate in recent time is Thomas Kuhn’s provoking book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* from 1962.⁵⁰

43. Tournikiotis’ examples include Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s traditional view of history as the great procession of styles, Nikolaus Pevsner and Sigfried Giedion’s use of history for legitimatizing purposes, Reyner Banham’s instrumental history of the immediate future, Peter Collins’ notion of the historian as a supplier of architectural precedents, and Manfredo Tafuri’s political crusade.

44. *Ibid.* p 221

45. Latour, *op.cit.* p 131

46. For a classic discussion of what characterizes a myth, see: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1973) esp. the essay “Myth Today”, p 109-159

47. Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas” in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988) p 29-67

48. Clive Dilnot, “The State of Design History, Part II” in Victor Margolin (ed.), *Design Discourse: History, theory, criticism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989) p 233-250, esp. p 236-237

49. Hård and Jamison, *op.cit.* p 294-307

Kuhn's prime motive is to refute the longstanding notion which had dominated the history and philosophy of science, seeing scientific knowledge as accumulative and evolutionary in character. To do so, he launches two terms intended to better explain the nature of scientific development; *paradigm* and *revolution*. The basic idea of the book is that science is formed in paradigms which supersede each other in a revolutionary manner. A paradigm is formed, consolidated, disseminated. Then it is questioned, gets challenged, and is overthrown in favour of a rival candidate in a revolution.

Over the following decades this work has spurred an impressive amount of criticism, praise, and revision. It has also inspired many scholars of other disciplines. On the following pages I will investigate the relation between these kuhnian paradigms and the isms so commonly used to classify architecture and design. The relevance and poignancy of such an investigation becomes, in my view, apparent when recalling that Kuhn himself based his theory of paradigms on the classification tradition in art history.⁵¹ Since the use of isms as a primary system of classification is perhaps the most evident, significant and—I would argue—most troublesome aspect of design history's legacy from art history,⁵² it certainly will be an interesting exercise to “return the favour” to Kuhn: Can isms be seen as paradigms? Does design develop through revolutions?

Due to the problems demonstrated by others in transferring Kuhn's theory to the social sciences and the history and sociology of science,⁵³ and the fundamental differences between the fields of science and design, I do not expect any easy analogy or synergism.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, I find the topic well worth exploring, because it might shed some light on the mysteries surrounding the nature of the development of design ideology and design practice. The theories proposed in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* have been vigorously debated ever since its publication in 1962. Without reiterating the well-known theories or entering this battle, I shall here briefly present

50. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962)

51. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [2nd ed.] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) p 208. Kuhn has also elsewhere explicitly stated that the book was a direct “product of... my own discovery of the close and persistent parallels between the two enterprises [science and art] that I had been taught to regard as polar.” This is not to say that Kuhn considered the histories of art and science as equivalent—in fact, in his metahistorical discussion of their relation he wrote that “it is only when we take particular care, deploying our subtlest analytic apparatus, that the distinction between artist and scientist and their products seems to evade us.... If *careful* analysis makes art and science seem so implausibly alike, that may be due less to their intrinsic similarity than to the failure of the tools we use for close scrutiny.” He also identified what he saw as one of the fundamental difference between the histories of art and science: “Unlike art, science destroys its own past”, indicating that science was more “revolutionary” than art: Thomas S. Kuhn, “Comment on the Relations of Science and Art“ in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension—Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) p 340-341 & 345. This is not the place to discuss the validity of this highly disputable assertion, but I still think it should be mentioned for the sake of nuance in the present discussion.

52. The Danish art and design historian Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen has claimed that this classification tradition in art history “has shown itself to be a tool that works quite well” when it comes to the *long duree* processes of older times but argues that “[w]ithin design history, the stylistic division of the last 150 years appears to be less pronounced; at least attempts are made to tone it down”: Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen, “Has Design History anything to do with Art History?” in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, 2001, p 17. This may be so, but there is still no shortage of attempts at applying this tool of classification to studies of 20th century industrial design, and the results are, in my view, mostly discouraging.

those of Kuhn's hypothesis and arguments that are of particular relevance for my investigation of the nature of isms.

A paradigm is the constellation of ideas, values, models, techniques, metaphysical assumptions, symbolic generalisations, etc. which is shared by a research community. It can also be concrete scientific achievements serving as models, examples and references for subsequent research. When scientists share a paradigm and work within a common disciplinary matrix, it brings about coherent, corresponding and accumulative scientific research. When a paradigm gains sufficient momentum and support, it will govern all research within its reach and the research activities become *normal science*. Those who do not conform to the paradigm are effectively excluded from the scientific community. Stargazers who still insist on geocentricism are not accepted as astrophysicists—much like the designers of traditionalesque objects are not considered serious, professional designers and consequentially excluded from a design community permeated by a modernist ethos.

A striking and appealing aspect of Kuhn's theory, and essential to its understanding, is the persistent stressing of the paradigm's dynamic character. It is in a state of continuous transformation and negotiation. But this intra-paradigmatic development is evolutionary and accumulative of nature. Even though a paradigm can be long-lasting, it is unlikely to be everlasting. As time passes, normal science articulates the paradigm in a more and more comprehensive and detailed manner. Thus, the chance of finding anomalies increases drastically. The period of *anormal science* in which a paradigm is challenged by one or several alternative theories and subsequently replaced by a new paradigm is, according to Kuhn, characterised by chaos, unconventional methods, violation of laws, fierce rhetorics, generation gap, and utter disrespect for traditions and institutions. It is these characteristics, due to their resemblance of those normally ascribed to political revolutions, which led Kuhn to coin his term *scientific revolution*. Paradigms succeed one another by way of revolutions. This type of development is by definition revolutionary rather than evolutionary, and it is disruptive rather than continuous.

53. See e.g. George Ritzer, *Toward an integrated sociological paradigm: the search for an exemplar and an image of the subject matter* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1981), Barry Barnes, *T. S. Kuhn and Social Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), Trevor J. Pinch and Wiebe E. Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other" in Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Huges and Trevor J. Pinch (Eds.), *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987) p 24-25 and Donald MacKenzie, "Missile Accuracy: A Case Study in the Social Processes of Technological Change" in Bijker, Huges and Pinch (Eds.), *op.cit.* p 209. However, relativist readings of Kuhn was also an influential step on the way towards general theories of social construction. For one example, see: Barry Barnes, "Thomas Kuhn" in Quentin Skinner (ed.), *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p 83-100

54. It is instructive to recall how W. David Kingery has criticised the application of Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions to the history of technology: "This model [Kuhn's] has been applied to rapid technological change—for example, the transformation from propeller-piston to turbojet aircraft engines (Constant 1980). However, unlike science, which deals with observations and ideas, technology cannot be seen as right or wrong but merely as appropriate for a particular social and cultural environment. After all, we still have propeller-piston aircraft engines.": W. David Kingery, "Technological Systems and Some Implications with Regard to Continuity and Change" in Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (eds.), *History From Things—Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993) p 225. Kingery's reference is to: Edward W. Constant, *The Origins of the Turbojet Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980)

The conversion necessary to recruit disciples and convince the entire profession or the relevant professional subgroup of abandoning their tradition of normal science in favour of a new and tentative paradigm is not carried out by logic arguments alone:

But paradigm debates are not really about relative problem-solving ability, though for good reasons they are usually couched in those terms... A decision between alternate ways of practising science is called for, and in the circumstances that decision must be based less on past achievement than on future promise... A decision of that kind can only be made on faith.⁵⁵

So, according to Kuhn, a successful paradigm candidate will win the battle not so much based on its problem-solving abilities as on its seductive appeal. Revolutions are thus executed by a negotiation dominated by rhetorics, persuasion and faith.⁵⁶ This description appears relevant to design and architectural history. The art of persuasion demonstrated e.g. by the missionaries of modernism is often so fundamentally emotional and flamboyant in nature that the arguments based on problem-solving abilities are effectively overshadowed.

As I mentioned introductorily, there is no general consensus as to whether or not Kuhn's theories are applicable to other fields than natural science.⁵⁷ In the postscript to the second edition (1970), Kuhn acknowledges—albeit somewhat reluctantly—the possible advantages of such a theory transfer. And the reason is that he himself has been inspired from other disciplines:

To the extent that the book portrays scientific development as a succession of tradition-bound periods punctuated by non-cumulative breaks, its thesis are undoubtedly of wide applicability. But they should be, for they are borrowed from other fields. Historians of literature, of music, of the arts, of political development, and many other human activities have long described their subjects in the same way. Periodization in terms of revolutionary breaks in style, taste, and institutional structure have been among their standard tools.⁵⁸

55. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [2nd ed.] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) p 157-158

56. This claim, that revolutions are structured as negotiations between incommensurable disciplinary matrixes and that these negotiations hence are characterized by emotional/political persuasion rather than logical argument, is one of the most controversial of Kuhn's assertions, and has led a number of his fellow philosophers of science to accuse Kuhn of reducing the nature of science and scientific change to something fundamentally irrational: Frederick Suppe, "The Search for Philosophic Understanding of Scientific Theories" in Frederick Suppe (ed.), *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977) p 150. One of the fiercest attacks on Kuhn on this argument can be found in: Israel Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967) p 74-89. Whether or not this criticism is appropriate in the field of the history/philosophy of science is beyond the scope of this text. I can not, however, see that it should be called for in the field of design history.

57. For a brief account of the controversial character of Kuhn's work even within the sociology of science, see: Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994) p 163-166

58. Kuhn, *op.cit.* p 208

This, and his earlier reference to the art historian Ernst H. Gombrich,⁵⁹ shows that my investigation of Kuhn's theories' appropriateness to design and architectural history is warranted, because these disciplines have inherited much of their theories, methods, and terminology from art history. The most prominent example of this is the use of isms as categorizing tools.

There are, however some aspects of Kuhn's conception of paradigms I find problematic with respect to its potential application to design history. One of these is the question of which level paradigms operate on. Another is the seemingly assumed exclusivity of one, governing paradigm in the periods of normal science. These notions warrant closer investigation.

2.8 Alternative paradigms and their different levels

One of the most articulate critics and refiners of Kuhn's theories is Paul Feyerabend.⁶⁰ Since the 1975 publication of his book *Against Method*,⁶¹ he has been labelled methodological anarchist or dadaist and epistemological *enfant terrible*. His main thesis is that science is mainly an anarchistic enterprise and that a theoretical anarchism is more humanitarian and more likely to encourage progress than a science based on strict methods: *anything goes!* In addition to being analytic, Feyerabend's work is highly normative—he is not only exploring how science is carried out, but also agitates for how it should be carried out.⁶² I will disregard this latter aspect of his writings. For the purpose at hand I will limit my comments to the question mentioned above, where he dissents with Kuhn—namely the unitarian and coherent nature of paradigms.

Feyerabend challenges this assumption by demonstrating through historical examples how the proliferation of theories is beneficial for science. He shows how scientists have, although efforts are commonly being made to avoid this impression, adopted a pluralistic methodology and that this is especially conspicuous in cases of extraordinary achievements:

Knowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing *ocean of mutually incompatible (and perhaps even incommensurable) alternatives*, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing the others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the

59. *Ibid.* p 160, n 1. Elsewhere Kuhn explicitly declared that “Gombrich's work... has been a great source of encouragement to me”: Thomas S. Kuhn, “Comment on the Relations of Science and Art” in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension—Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) p 340-341

60. Like Kuhn, both Feyerabend and his fellow Kuhn-dissident Imre Lakatos have been read by sociologists and their theories applied to social science. For an example, see: Richard Biernacki, “Method and Metaphor After the New Cultural History” in Bonnell and Hunt (eds.), *op.cit.* p 62-84

61. Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method—Outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge* (London: NLB, 1975)

62. For a survey of the criticism raised against Feyerabend's early philosophy of science, especially regarding his discussions on alterations in meanings and incommensurability of theories, see: Suppe, *op.cit.* p 199-208

development of our consciousness.⁶³

Feyerabend thus opens up for a modified interpretation of kuhnian paradigms by suggesting the existence of several, co-existing paradigms. He suggests that the methodological unit to be pursued is constituted by a “*whole set of partly overlapping, factually adequate, but mutually inconsistent theories*”.⁶⁴ In other words; we must accept the existence of a multi-paradigmatic state.

Within each disciplinary sub-field defined by each paradigm, the scientific activity can prosper and develop. But each sub-field as defined by each paradigm is more trivial and narrow than the broader field as defined by intuition. Also, the various operational definitions given by each paradigm may be severely discordant with one another. Thus, discussions on the broader field’s fundamental and philosophical basis are obscured and hampered.

This situation may be broken up by a revolution, in which precisely these fundamental and philosophical questions are made headlines of the agenda. Such revolutions are most definitely not strictly rational and logical. They are networks of complex structures inhabited by actors with vastly differing and also hidden agendas and fought by virtually any means necessary. Feyerabend refers to them as “power struggles” rather than rational changes.⁶⁵

Although Feyerabend seconds Kuhn’s view on the existence, function and characteristics of revolutions, he criticises Kuhn’s developmental pattern *normal science (monism)—revolution (proliferation)—normal science (monism)* by showing that proliferation is not restricted to the periods of crisis and revolution, but is always present—both before, during and after revolutions—and is in fact the very crux of the nature of scientific development.⁶⁶

It is not always clear exactly what Kuhn means by the term paradigm. In a later concession to his critics on how the ambivalent and ambiguous use of the term resulted in a state where “[the book] can be too nearly all things to all people”,⁶⁷ Kuhn himself tried to disentangle the confusion and clarify the situation by admitting to two essentially different uses of it; paradigm as an “exemplar” and paradigm as a “disciplinary matrix”.⁶⁸ Margaret Masterman, on the other hand, counts at least 22 different definitions of paradigm in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.⁶⁹ But then she categorises the definitions and ends up identifying three senses of the term paradigm.

63. Feyerabend, *op.cit.* p 30

64. *Ibid.* p 39

65. *Ibid.* p 199

66. Paul Feyerabend, “Consolations for the Specialist” in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) p 207-208

67. Thomas Kuhn, “Second Thoughts on Paradigms” in Frederick Suppe (ed.), *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977) p 459

68. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [2nd ed.] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) p 182-187 [postscript] and Thomas Kuhn, “Second Thoughts on Paradigms” in Suppe (ed.), *op.cit.* p 459-482. Pursuing these distinctions within the realm of the philosophy of science is beyond my scope. For an in-depth discussion and critique of Kuhn’s reformulations, see: Frederick Suppe, “Exemplars, Theories and Disciplinary Matrixes” in Suppe (ed.), *op.cit.* p 483-499

69. Margaret Masterman, “The Nature of a Paradigm” in Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.), *op.cit.* p 61-65

The first sense is the group of definitions that function on a philosophical level. These are the *metaphysical paradigms*. This is when a paradigm is defined as a world view, as a set of beliefs, as a metaphysical speculation, as a new way of seeing, or as an organizing principle. The second sense is the group of definitions which function on a sociological level. These are the *sociological paradigms*. This is when a paradigm is defined as a recognized scientific achievement, as equivalent to a set of political institutions, or as equivalent to an accepted judicial decision (precedent). The third sense is the group of definitions which function on a more pragmatic level. These are the *artefact paradigms*. This is when a paradigm is defined as a classic work, as a model, as supplying tools, as instrumentation, or as an analogy, and seem to correspond to Kuhn's understanding of a paradigm as "exemplar".⁷⁰

Masterman's differentiation of the kuhnian paradigms is, in my opinion, a crucial step on the way to making the paradigmatic perspective congruous to design history. This assertion results from the above discussion of isms as highly ambiguous and versatile entities that are used and understood on multiple levels. The implicitness and inconsistency of significations and meanings ascribed to different isms in different contexts complicate a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and thus also hamper a more constructive and valuable epistemological application of these frequently but confusingly used terms. Let us, then, see how these different paradigmatic levels correspond to the different understandings and uses of isms in design.⁷¹

The metaphysical paradigms correspond to isms describing a world view, a set of beliefs, a metaphysical speculation, a new way of seeing, or an organizing principle. Isms of this sort are fairly universal and long-lasting. Examples may be grand epochs of the past, like the Renaissance, or the by far dominant world view of the twentieth century; Modernism. This kind of isms can be seen as equivalent to what has earlier been described as an *episteme*.⁷²

The sociological paradigms correspond to isms describing recognized achievements, sets of institutions, formalities, sets of accepted values, modes, or precedents. Isms of this sort can be both ephemeric and enduring in span; both narrow and vast in scope. They may co-exist in a multi-paradigmatic state—at times peacefully, at times in conflict.⁷³ Most isms and movements of twentieth century architecture and design belong on this paradigmatic level. Examples may be Art Déco, Streamlining, or

70. *Ibid.* p 65 and Kuhn, *op.cit.* p 471

71. I must here emphasize that my use of the term isms must not be taken literally—I willingly include any word describing an ideological or aesthetic movement in architecture or design even if it does not end with the prescribed suffix—hence, Art Déco, Scandinavian Design, Streamlining, and their likes are all isms to me.

72. See e.g. Foucault, *op.cit.*

73. Here it is interesting that Kuhn himself pointed to what he saw as a weak point in his analogy between the historic developments of science and art: "[J]ust because the success of one artistic tradition does not render another wrong or mistaken, art can support, far more readily than science, a number of simultaneous incompatible traditions of schools. For the same reason, when traditions do change, the accompanying controversies are usually resolved far more rapidly in science than in art." He thus believes science to more "revolutionary" than art, and his view of paradigms in art seems to draw near Feyerabend's multi-paradigmatic model (which concerns science, and not art, though): Thomas S. Kuhn, "Comment on the Relations of Science and Art" in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension—Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) p 348

Deconstructivism. This way of describing ideological development and structure in the history of design by introducing the concept of a multi-paradigmatic state has an interesting parallel in the British design historian John Heskett's recent "layering theory of design history" where Heskett states that

in everyday life, in contrast to the theories of academe, the new has never entirely replaced the old, but has instead been layered upon it... Design is therefore simultaneously about change, continuity and adaption.⁷⁴

Although Heskett here is concerned with manufacturing technologies and their development as a fundamental aspect of design history, I believe the same perspective can be applied to the ideological development of design history. Heskett's demonstration of how different forms of production which are often linked to different epochs, cultures, societies and design practices in fact "all still exist in one form or another across the globe, although many have been subject to modification as they continue to evolve",⁷⁵ is in my view directly analogue to my proposed conceptualization of ideological development and structure in the history of design as a multi-paradigmatic state. This suggested analogy concurs with a similar point made by the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard:

The old sideboard, the car and the tape recorder exist side by side in the one sphere, even though their imaginary modes of existence, just like their technical modes of existence, differ radically.⁷⁶

Much in the same vein, the German design historian Rainer Wick has warned against what he considered the all too common (as of twenty years ago) practice of considering styles as discrete, consecutive entities and asserted that we must acknowledge the "simultaneousness of the unsimultaneous", i.e. the fact "that various layers of historical time—different in duration, speed or acceleration—can temporally overlap."⁷⁷ Similarly, and indicating that this temporal syncretism does in fact apply both to technological and ideological development, the Cuban design historian Lucila Fernández Uriarte has pointed to "the parallel existence of different works, technology and cultural periods of historical evolution in the same historic phase."⁷⁸ The complexity of temporal ideology is of course not restricted to the sphere of design, but is prevalent in society at

74. John Heskett, "Some lessons of design history" in Astrid Skjerven (ed.), *Designkompetanse—Utvikling, forskning og undervisning* (Oslo: Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo, 2005) p 13. A similar point has been made by Enrico Castelnovo and Jacques Gubler: "[A]dvanced technology does not do away with the old objects at all. In short the antinomy of the modern and the archaic does not generate conflict, but a process of adaptation.": Enrico Castelnovo and Jacques Gubler, "The Mysterious Object—Notes on the Historiography of Design" in Carlo Pirovano (ed. in chief), *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 3: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design* (Milano: Electa, 1990) p 411

75. Heskett, *op.cit.* p 13

76. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996) p 118

77. Wick, *op.cit.* p 46

78. Lucila Fernández Uriarte, "Modernity and Postmodernity from Cuba" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005 p 246. Uriarte develops her arguments from what she considers to be particular traits of Cuba and other underdeveloped countries, but I believe her observations to be more universal than what she seems to imply.

large. As the American historian David Lowenthal has observed; “retrospective nostalgia coexists with impatient modernism.”⁷⁹

Masterman’s third paradigmatic level, the artefact paradigms, correspond to isms describing a classic work, a model, an example, a tool box, instrumentation, or an analogy. Isms of this sort are highly instrumentalistic, pragmatic, and conformistic. Isms belong on this paradigmatic level when they are primarily considered as styles or as formal expressions. These isms are normally made up of a series of prefigurative exemplars or models functioning as prototypes, as a repertoire, or as a reservoir of possibilities. Canonic products/works and their constellations form such isms. One might also consider each canonic product/work an artefact paradigm in its own right.⁸⁰ However, it must be stressed that also the interpretations of canonic works are subject to changes according to paradigmatic developments.⁸¹

Introducing this differential multi-paradigmatic system probably raises more questions than it answers, and there are surely many alternative sound ways of approaching this topic. These reflections are intended as a first step towards a broader conceptual framework for exploring the dynamics of design historical change. In closing, I will offer some remarks on how the differential multi-paradigmatic system might function as a tool for thought when inquiring into isms as an epistemological phenomenon in particular and structures of ideological developments in design history in general.

2.9 (R)evolution? Paradigm(s)? Modernism(s)?

Following the differential paradigmatic system introduced above one might ask on which paradigmatic level revolutions occur. Based on the characterizations and distinctions that have been introduced, I find it plausible to say that the notion of revolutions in design history belongs to the primary level of metaphysical paradigms. These world views or sets of beliefs can be said to reign relatively sovereign for a longer period, be challenged and

79. David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p 35

80. This would correspond to Kuhn’s notion of a paradigm as a standard example, an exemplar. Studying and learning to understand such exemplars are, according to Kuhn, an essential element for aspiring members of a professional community (paradigm as “disciplinary matrix”). Kuhn’s examples refer to how acquiring an arsenal of exemplars from the history of physics (e.g. Galileo’s pendulum and the Schrödinger equation) is one of the most fundamental processes whereby students of physics are enrolled in the community of professional physicists. I would argue that this situation corresponds well to how acquiring an arsenal of exemplars from the history of architecture—i.e. by studying canonic works—is one of the most fundamental processes whereby students of architecture are enrolled in the community of professional architects: Thomas Kuhn, “Second Thoughts on Paradigms” in Suppe (ed.), *op.cit.* p 471 & 477. In the present context, it is also interesting to note that Kuhn himself considered this understanding of paradigm as the most relevant parallel to the sphere of art history: “If the notion of paradigm can be useful to the art historian, it will be pictures not styles that serve as paradigms.”: Thomas S. Kuhn, “Comment on the Relations of Science and Art“ in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension—Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) p 351

81. Juan Pablo Bonta, *Architecture and its Interpretation—A Study of Expressive Systems in Architecture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1979) p 131-174

finally overthrown by rebels. Thus, the classic kuhnian developmental pattern *normal science (monism)—revolution (proliferation)—normal science (monism)* might seem apt in describing the primary level of metaphysical paradigms, although probably not so regarding the secondary and third levels of sociological and artefact paradigms.

This can be illustrated by borrowing one of Kuhn's own favourite examples of a scientific revolution; the shift from newtonian to einsteinian physics. His claim that this represented a revolution might make sense when considered on an epistemological or metaphysical level, in that relativity theory might be said to have drastically altered the reigning world view. However, for most worldly endeavours, newtonian physics still makes perfectly good sense—engineers, architects and designers rarely need to supplant newtonian physics. This suggests that even such a neat example as relativity theory can be said to represent a scientific revolution only when considered at the primary level of metaphysical paradigms, and not in the empirical sphere of secondary level of sociological paradigms.

It is customarily and, to a certain extent, rather convincingly argued that Modernism represents a metaphysical paradigm resulting from a revolution.⁸² Still, one might argue—as the Norwegian architectural historian Mari Hvattum does—that “[t]he much discussed rupture is... only made possible by a strong continuity in the history of ideas between historicism and modernism”.⁸³ This ambivalence regarding continuity/rupture might depend, at least in part, on whether one considers modernism as an episteme (metaphysical paradigm, world view) or as an ism (sociological paradigm, design ideology).

Also, modernism still seems to be the reigning primary level metaphysical paradigm simply because, as Jürgen Habermas has pointed out, the project of modernity has not yet been fulfilled.⁸⁴ A metaphysical paradigm like modernism consists of several domains, of which the artistic/aesthetic/ideological sphere is but one alongside other cultural spheres as well as social, political, economic and technological ones.⁸⁵ Hence,

82. Although some recent research contributions to the history of early modernist architecture have emphasized continuity over rupture in the analysis of the transitional period from late romanticism to early modernism. See e.g.: Anders Munch, *Den stilløse stil: Adolf Loos* (Copenhagen: Kunstakademiets Arkitektskoles forlag, 2002) and Mari Lending, *Omkring 1900—Utkast til en arkitekturhistorisk toppikk* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitektur- og designhøgskolen i Oslo, 2005). In a sense, though, this is nothing new—already in his 1960 *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* Reyner Banham demonstrated how classical ideals regarding composition, plan and aesthetic principles prevailed also in the modern architecture of the 1920s: Tournikiotis, *op.cit.* p 145-146. Only a few years later, and much in the same vein, Peter Collins traced the sources of the ideas of 20th century architecture to much older origins: Collins, *op.cit.*

83. Mari Hvattum, “Historisme og modernisme i moderne arkitekturhistorieskriving” in *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2006, p 89 (“Det mye omtalte bruddet er... kun muligjort av en sterk idéhistorisk kontinuitet mellom historisme og modernisme”)

84. Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity—An Incomplete Project” in Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic—Essays on Post-Modern Culture* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983) p 3-15. Andrea Branzi has also argued for the persistence of modernism, but asserts that “the design of today is operating within a modernity that is stripped of enlightenment”: Andrea Branzi, *Learning From Milan—Design and the Second Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988) p 46. Others, of course, beg to differ: Bruno Latour has argued that the nature-culture dichotomy, which is generally accepted as one of the principle hallmarks of modernity, is no obviousness but largely a matter of faith and hence that we have never been modern: Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993)

negating one or some of these does not automatically turn an ideological movement into a revolution:

Communication processes need a cultural tradition covering all spheres—cognitive, moral-practical and expressive. A rationalized everyday life, therefore, could hardly be saved from cultural impoverishment through breaking open a single cultural sphere—art—and so providing access to just one of the specialized knowledge complexes. The surrealist revolt would have replaced only one abstraction.⁸⁶

Habermas' example of an ideological movement aspiring to paradigmatic revolution is surrealist art, but I would assert that most self-proclaimed avant-garde design movements of the last decades could easily take its place. Because just like surrealist art, they represent alternative paradigms rather than revolutionary ones—despite the flamboyant rhetorics.

It should be noted that the structural longevity of epistemes makes their characteristics particularly difficult to discern unequivocally in contemporary analysis. These difficulties are only enhanced by the fact that our own identities, our thoughts, our ideas, and all our knowledge are afforded and restricted by the very episteme or metaphysical paradigm under investigation.

Nevertheless, the last decades have not lacked for prophecies and assertions of a post-modern revolution. But it is doubtful whether these claims have succeeded in identifying a *revolutionary*, metaphysical paradigm as defined here. For instance, the American architectural historian Charles Jencks claimed that

Modern Architecture died in St Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32 p.m. (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks were given the final *coup de grâce* by dynamite... Boom, boom, boom.⁸⁷

This statement from Jencks' book *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* refers to the demolition of a housing project planned and constructed in 1950-1954, designed by the firm of Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth, and is intended to demonstrate the failure and fall of modernism.⁸⁸ It is a punch line of dimensions and it is so marvellously tabloid that even the father of New Journalism, Tom Wolfe, genuflects Jencks' proclamation of death in his crusade against modernism; *From Bauhaus to Our House*.⁸⁹

The American architectural historian Katharine G. Bristol has demonstrated how the Pruitt-Igoe myth is constructed on a series of highly questionable assumptions regarding

85. The notion of postmodernism as a revolutionary paradigm is therefore just as problematic in the history of technology as it is in art history and design history, because, as the Australian media theorists Andrew Murphie and John Potts have observed, "[t]here is an overlapping of techniques and concerns into the 'postmodern' period that often goes unremarked.": Andrew Murphie and John Potts, *Culture & Technology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p 62

86. Habermas, *op.cit.* p 11

87. Jencks, *op.cit.* p 9

88. The Pruitt-Igoe demolition is also cited in an earlier declaration of the failure of modern architecture: Peter Blake, *Form Follows Fiasco—Why Modern Architecture Hasn't Worked* (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1974) p 154-155

89. Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981) p 63-64

the role of architects and architectural design in social housing development and points to a series of other aspects, structures and actors responsible for the demise of this housing project. By reducing the problems of public housing to a question of (autonomous, physical) design, Jencks and his co-constructors of the Pruitt-Igoe myth have inflated the power of the architect and architectural design at the expense of the other inhabitants of the actor network in question and thus turned the myth into a weapon in the debate on aesthetic aspects of architectural design.⁹⁰

It is perhaps unfair to measure Jencks' rhetoric and arguments against stringent demands of academic historical research—the book is a polemic manifest.⁹¹ They do, however, make up an excellent example of the need any emerging ism (in this case post-modernism) has to ridicule and falsify the dominating ideas and practices of the present in order to portray its own ideas as new, revolutionary, seminal, and true. By declaring the death of modernism and proclaiming the ascendancy of the new paradigm of postmodernism, Jencks employs an ordering device that is as conventional as it is simplistic. But conceptualising isms as a “string of pearls”, or a “family tree” is perhaps the most evident example of his fundamentally modernist affiliation. Because, as the British sociologist John Law has argued; “the idea that there is a *single* order... is the dream, or the nightmare, of modernity.”⁹² Jencks' act is thus that of a true modernist—because, like the Norwegian philosopher Arnfinn Bø-Rygg has pointed out:

When today—from an allegedly postmodern vantage point—we historicise modernity or declare ourselves to have reached a postmodern state, this is itself a modern impulse.⁹³

Similar points have been proposed by others as well: The Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo argues that it is precisely the desire to represent something historically new and different that de facto links postmodernism to the basic idea of modernism.⁹⁴ Similarly, the Romanian literary historian Matei Calinescu argues convincingly that “Postmodernism is a face of modernity”, alongside Modernism.⁹⁵

Acknowledging the problems regarding the advocacy of a postmodern revolution or age, Omar Calabrese has suggested to speak instead of the *neobaroque age* (*l'età neobarocca*), because the term postmodernism is both too equivocal and too generic to be useful.⁹⁶ Whether his suggestion solves any problems is highly debatable,⁹⁷ but it goes to show that any consensus regarding a postmodern paradigm hardly can be said to have materialized.

90. Katharine G. Bristol, “The Pruitt-Igoe myth” in Keith L. Eggner (ed.), *American Architectural History—A Contemporary Reader* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004) p 352-364

91. Why, then, is Jencks largely considered such an authority on post-modern architecture? Trying to answer this question, the Dutch literary historian Hans Bertens finds it “tempting to think that this has to do with the fact that his model is eminently accessible—as is his style—while it simultaneously *seems* intellectually respectable.” (my italics): Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern—A History* (London: Routledge, 1995) p 57

92. John Law, *Organizing Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) p 2

93. Arnfinn Bø-Rygg, “What modernism was—Art, progress and the avant-garde” in Mari Hvattum and Christian Hermansen (eds.), *Tracing Modernity—Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City* (London: Routledge, 2004) p 23

94. Gianni Vattimo, *La fine della modernità* (Milano: Garzanti, 1985) p 12-15

95. Calinescu, *op.cit.* p (265-)312

If postmodernism were to be considered a primary level, metaphysical paradigm, then the Kuhnian idea of a paradigm as a developmental state following a revolution must be refuted altogether. A different definition substituting for paradigm would then be required; for instance by returning to the evolutionary theories of Karl Popper or relying on Imre Lakatos' rationalistic ideas of a *research programme*.⁹⁸ However, the term "evolution" could in itself be troublesome, because it has often been associated with an archaic approach to history where historical development is portrayed as linear, conform, absolutist and deterministic.⁹⁹ This has characterized traditions as diverse as traditional moralistic history, positivist history (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) and the internalist profession histories—where the history of design lines up with those of science, of technology, and of medicine.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Popper's evolutionary approach is problematic in that it stands firmly by the representationalist view of science and thus becomes essentially *ahistorical*.¹⁰¹ Feyerabend's philosophy of science, on the other hand, denounces representationalism, and can thus provide a better basis for understanding the dynamics of historical change—not only in the history of science, but in design history as well. This dawning interest in *processes* intrinsic to the work of Kuhn and Feyerabend has more recently been cultivated extensively within the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS)—to which I shall return in Chapter 4.

2.10 Modern ISMS

Whereas postmodernism or other 20th century design ideological movements hardly can be considered primary level, metaphysical paradigms, they can be considered paradigms of a secondary level; sociological paradigms. This requires that we accept Feyerabend's and Masterman's interpretations of Kuhn which allow for a multi-paradigmatic situation.

-
96. Calabrese, *op.cit.* p 14-17. This topic is further explored in Mario Perniola, *Enigmi—il momento egizio nella società e nell'arte* (Genova: Edizioni Costa & Nolan, 1990) p 103-123 and Dick Hebdige, "Staking out the Posts" in Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light—On Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988) p 181-207. As opposed to Calabrese, Hebdige asserts that it is precisely the ambiguity of the term that makes it worth exploring: "[T]he degree of semantic complexity and overload surrounding the term "postmodernism" at the moment signals that a significant number of people with conflicting interests and opinions feel that there is something sufficiently important to at stake here to be worth struggling and arguing over." (p 182)
97. Nevertheless, Calabrese's view on our late-modern times as a neobaroque age becomes quite fascinating when paired with Jean Baudrillard's assertion that "it is the baroque, with its predilection for the allegorical, its new discursive individualism based on redundant forms and tricked-up materials, and its demiurgic formalism, that is the true inaugurating moment of the modern age." We are about to come full circle, or reach fulfilment, as it were: "The baroque clearly foreshadows on the artistic plane all the themes and myths of our technological civilization, right down to its paroxysmic formalism of detail and movement.": Baudrillard, *op.cit.* p 113
98. See e.g. Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge—An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) and Imre Lakatos, "The History of Science and its Rational Reconstruction" in Imre Lakatos (edited by John Worrall and Gregory Currie), *Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)
99. For a critical survey of such historiographic traditions, see e.g.: Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *op.cit.* p 15-125. One interesting attempt at employing the term evolution in design history explicitly purging it of any association with linearity is: O. A. van Nierop, A. C. M. Blankendaal and C. J. Overbeeke, "The Evolution of the Bicycle: A Dynamic Systems Approach" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997 p 253-267

Seen as a sociological paradigm, an ism is a set of institutions, accepted values and achievements, modes, formalities, or precedents. Postmodernism can thus be regarded as a genuine, articulate, adequate, and autonomous paradigm. But it is not *the* new paradigm; it is *a* new, alternative paradigm.

My suggestion of modernism as a metaphysical paradigm functioning more or less as an episteme for all isms (secondary level, sociological paradigms) of the twentieth century should become more intelligible, and perhaps also more plausible, through some schematic illustrations of the heterogeneous, extensive, and diversified character of modernism as a function of different parameters. Here it is opportune, though, to recall how Dominick LaCapra cautions us against treating analytical categories—such as isms—as dichotomous, discrete entities.¹⁰² While keeping in mind that in any empirical analysis, categories presuppose, overlap and supplement each other, I will in this specific epistemological context emphasize the clarificatory effect of such a highly schematic presentation, despite its obvious shortcomings in terms of unjust simplification.

Considering modernism as a primary level metaphysical paradigm might allow us to better understand, and explore the remarkable transformations of modernism through space and time [Figure 2-1]. And the chronological dissection is only one of many

Modernism dissected chronologically

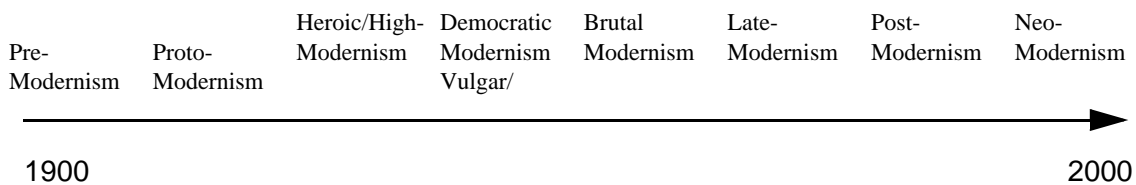


Figure 2–1: A coarse illustration of the chronological development of modernism should indicate that modernism is a primary level metaphysical paradigm which is constantly transformed.

100. For a bold attempt at restoring an evolutionary approach to design history, see: Artemis Yagou, “Rethinking Design History From an Evolutionary Perspective: Background and Implications” in *The Design Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2005, p 50-60. One of the more elaborate and consistent earlier examples of the evolutionary approach applied to design history (although by no means a history of any design *profession*) and which insists on eluding the fallacy of determinism is: Philip Steadman, *The Evolution of Designs: Biological Analogy in Architecture and the Applied Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). However, even Steadman goes a long way in admitting that this evolutionary approach and biological analogy is not appropriate for the study of *modern* design. (It may be interesting to note that the concluding chapter of the book appeared in the very first issue of Design Research Society’s journal *Design Studies*: Philip Steadman, “The History and Science of the Artificial” in *Design Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1979, p 49-58). Furthermore, this more or less archaeological notion of evolution has other shortcomings as well, one of which has been pointed out by the American archaeologist Ian Hodder: “The evolutionary perspective has emphasized adaptive relationships at different levels of complexity, but it has not encouraged an examination of the particular historical context.”: Ian Hodder, “Theoretical archaeology: a reactionary view” in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994) p 51

101. Rune Nydal, *I vitenskapens tid—Introduksjon til vitenskapsfilosofi etter Kuhn* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2002) p 142

102. LaCapra, *op.cit.* p 152

possible ways of demonstrating the diversity, complexity and heterogeneity of modernism. Its extensive and inclusive character may also be portrayed as a function of other parameters. For instance, the ideological and political dispersion and divergence clearly show that modernism does not represent any common and homogeneous ground; no shared sets of accepted values and ideas [Figure 2-2]. In other words: modernism, at

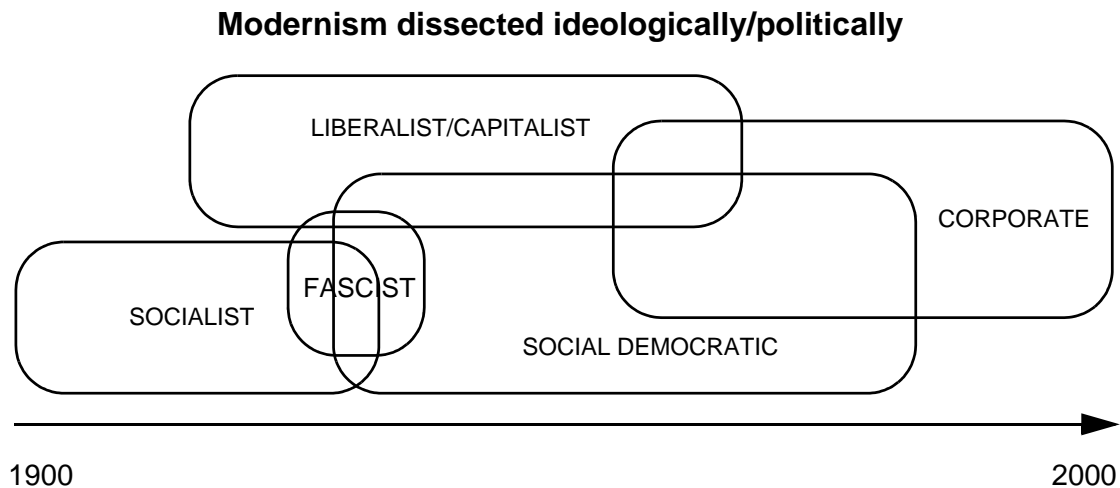


Figure 2-2: The ideological motivation and political commitment in the different phases and branches of modernism shows severe variations and covers a vast spectrum.

least when approached in this manner, does not fit the above mentioned definition of a secondary level sociological paradigm.

Yet another way of displaying the differentiated, comprehensive and inclusive character of modernism is by offering a cross-section of the different movements or segments it encompasses at a given moment in time [Figure 2-3]. This suggests that the primary level metaphysical paradigm constituted by modernism contains several secondary level sociological paradigms constituted by the familiar isms of the twentieth century. Modernism as a world view, as a metaphysical paradigm, or as an episteme affords and restricts the isms as a—to paraphrase Feyerabend—*whole set of partly overlapping, factually adequate, but mutually inconsistent movements*. It follows that each ism of the twentieth century could in general be considered a secondary level sociological paradigm, which combined form a multi-paradigmatic state. However, this outline is too schematic, and modernism might seem to hover or oscillate somewhere between the primary and the secondary level, featuring some characteristics of a metaphysical paradigm, some of a sociological paradigm.

2.11 Conclusion

As I have tried to demonstrate on these pages, the terminological and conceptual challenges of studying modernism and modern design are considerable. It is my hope,

Modernism dissected sectionally/paradigmatically

Ca.1960

Neo-functionalism / <i>Gute form</i> Scandinavian design Organic design Streamlining / Styling Neo-Liberty / <i>Bel design</i> Pop-design Anti-design	MODERNISM
Traditionalesque Historicist Eclectic / Kitsch / <i>Ersatz</i>	NOSTALGIC

Figure 2–3: Modernism as a primary level, metaphysical paradigm can be said to contain a whole set of secondary level, sociological paradigms.

then, that some of the findings of this initial and tentative inquiry can become helpful guidelines for the subsequent endeavour into the world of 20th century design.

This chapter started out with a brief historical outline of the fundamental terms modern, modernity and modernism, before attempting a clarification of the relation between isms as doctrines or aesthetic ideologies on the one hand and isms as world views or structures of society on the other. The distinction between isms and epistemes is crucial to bear in mind, but can be difficult to sustain. It becomes increasingly so when the two appear under the same term, as they often do in the case of modernism. This fact does most certainly complicate any study of modernism, but it might also be a key to understanding the phenomenon and explaining its comprehensive and prevailing character.

One of the main ambitions of this chapter has been to argue that an ism can be understood as a cultural mode defined by negotiations between design ideology and design practice. This notion will become an important underpinning throughout this study. After this proposition of modern isms as articulations of design culture, the focus shifted towards a discussion of isms as dynamic discourses. Isms are not solid, monolithic blocks. They are constantly formed, transformed and reformed throughout their lifespans by way of unceasing negotiations within the actor networks. These processes of domestication show that isms are dynamic, changing phenomena in constant development. If we appreciate this core property, isms are not categorizing strait jackets, but can become interesting and fruitful objects of study. This discussion on the dynamic and diverse character of isms in general and of the various guises of modernism in particular will come to bear on the ensuing empirical study seeking to analyse the transformation of design culture in mid-twentieth century Norway.

The latter half of this chapter has sought to approach the issue of isms from a different perspective, exploring the prospects of kuhnian paradigms in framing the dynamics of historical change in design ideology. The brief reassessment of the kuhnian notion of paradigms and how this concept might relate to that of isms should by no means be understood as any decisive or exhaustive elucidation, but rather as one possible and tentative way of exploring the many questions raised by the topic at hand.

Introducing the differential paradigmatic system to design history does not by any means solve every epistemological problem posed by isms as a terminological category. But the general view and the analytic tools offered by such a system may render it a valuable contribution to a broader conceptual framework capable of improving our understanding of this complex phenomenon. The presuppositions, presumptions, and tacitness that all too often accompany the use and interpretation of isms bear evidence of the need for enhanced structuring and articulation of this set of problems.

This chapter has sought to explore some basic terms and concepts that are impossible to ignore for a historian of industrial design. It is meant as an introductory discussion, and thus deliberately raises more questions than it professes to answer. It clearly leaves a lot to be desired, but hopefully prepares the ground for the more directive discussions of historiography, theory and methodology that follow.

3 Historicising design, designing history

3.1 Introduction

Design history has a fairly brief history compared to many other academic disciplines. Surely, designed objects, their conception, manufacture, meaning and use have been subject to historical studies for a long time in older fields such as archaeology, art history and history, but design history in its own right is a relatively recent phenomenon—at least when measured by the degree of professional dispersion, organisation and institutionalisation. In order to orient and position myself in this field, then, I have found it necessary to discuss its historiography, theory and methodology at some length. This chapter will first present a brief outline of the development of the field before discussing more in detail some central approaches in recent design history, focusing in particular on questions that will be pertinent to this study. It will move from a critique of the heritage from art history, via a discussion of the formation of an industrial design history proper and an analysis of theoretical and methodological debates, onward to an assessment of the influence from material culture studies, before ending up arguing for a cultural history of industrial design as the perspective to be followed in this study.

Exhaustive historiographies of design are in short supply, but some brief but informative outlines have been proposed.¹ Attempts to summarize the historiography of design tend to start out by discussing Nikolaus Pevsner's 1936 *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, sometimes pausing at Sigfried Giedion's 1948 *Mechanization Takes Command*, before moving on to Reyner Banham's 1960 *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*.² Both the merits and the shortcomings of these works have been debated thoroughly for several decades, so there is no need to repeat that discussion here.³ Although all three were trained as art historians and the bulk of their work was dedicated to architectural history, their contribution to design history is indisputable.⁴ However, three books in the course of a quarter of a century can hardly be said to make up a separate discipline.⁵

-
1. These include: Clive Dilnot, "The State of Design History, Part I" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1984, p 3-23, Clive Dilnot, "The State of Design History, Part II" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1984, p 3-20, Enrico Castelnuovo and Jacques Gubler, "The Mysterious Object—Notes on the Historiography of Design" in Carlo Pirovano (ed. in chief), *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 3: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design* (Milano: Electa, 1990) p 404-413, Victor Margolin, "Design history or design studies: subject matter and methods" in *Design Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1992, p 104-116, Jonathan M. Woodham, "Resisting Colonization: Design History Has Its own Identity" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995, p 22-37, Jonathan M. Woodham, "Designing Design History: From Pevsner to Postmodernism" [conference paper] (delivered at the conference *Digitisation and Knowledge* at Auckland University of Technology, 14.02.2001) and Victor Margolin, "Design History in the United States, 1977-2000" in Victor Margolin, *The Politics of the Artificial* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) p 126-187
 2. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the modern movement—from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936), Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command—a contribution to anonymous history* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948) and Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: Architectural Press, 1960)

There is a general agreement that Great Britain led the way in the development of design history as an academic discipline. Both in terms of publication volume, educational programmes, organisational structure and the number of academic appointments and other practitioners, Britain may still be considered the heartland of design history today.⁶ This situation is largely the result of a development from the 1970s where many of the country's polytechnics and art colleges established courses in design history, partially to supplement and support their art, crafts and design programmes. The development in other countries should not be disparaged, but volume and organisation does matter. As the British art and design historian John A. Walker puts it:

The awareness that a distinct discipline exists occurs when a sufficient number of practitioners become self-conscious about their activities and begin to join together to discuss common problems and interests. It is usually at this critical juncture that a professional organization is formed. In Britain the Design History Society was established in 1977 even though, of course, histories of design were being written long before that date. Once an organization exists, the trappings of an academic discipline soon follow: elected officers, a newsletter, a scholarly journal, an annual conference.⁷

The *Journal of Design History* did not appear until 1988, but “got off to a good start” and has since established a reputation as a renowned and essential publication.⁸

Looser organisation and wider scope characterizes the development in the USA. A Design History Forum (now: Design Studies Forum) was founded in 1983, and the

-
3. For historiographical analyses of their work, see: Peter Draper (ed.), *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), Sokratis Georgiadis, *Sigfried Giedion: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2002), Gillian Naylor, “Theory and Design: The Banham Factor: The Ninth Reyner Banham Memorial Lecture” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997 p 241-252 and Vincent Michael, “Reyner Banham: Signs and Designs in the Time Without Style” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2002, p 65-77
 4. Even Pevsner's *Pioneers...* and Banham's *Theory and Design...* deal primarily with architecture and architectural theory, but have nonetheless been considered seminal texts of design history. However, as Nigel Whiteley has pointed out, Banham's greatest influence on design history probably does not stem from his academic history research but from his design criticism, which is where he most explicitly argued that “design, embedded in popular culture, is part of a social language and cultural usage.”: Nigel Whiteley, “Olympus and the Market Place: Reyner Banham and Design Criticism” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1997, p 24-35 (quote p 28). Similarly, it is interesting to note that amongst Pevsner's many publications, the one that centres most specifically on industrial design—the 1937 book *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England*—is more a study of contemporary design than a history of design: Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937). For a discussion of this, see: Pauline Madge, “An Enquiry into Pevsner's "Enquiry"” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1988 p 113-126 and Gillian Naylor, “Good design in British industry 1930-1956” in Draper (ed.), *op.cit.* p 177-187
 5. This is of course an exaggeration: It is not difficult to find publications prior to 1960 which in their subject matters are relevant to design history, such as histories of furniture, fashion, interiors, various crafts, etc., but it would be harder to identify a common professional identity and community unifying a field of design history.
 6. Not only was the Design History Society founded in Britain (1977), but as recently as 2004 about 80% of the DHS members were British: Jonathan M. Woodham, “Local, National and Global: Redrawing the Design Historical Map” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005 p 258
 7. John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989) p 1-2
 8. Reed Benhamou, “*Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, nos. 1-4.” [Review] in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1991, p 136

journal *Design Issues* was launched in 1984.⁹ This community is an important arena for design history, but, as the journal's subtitle *history / theory / criticism* suggests, its scope exceeds that of history.¹⁰ In Scandinavia, the discipline of design history remains small and loosely organised, despite the establishment of the Nordic Forum for Design History (Nordisk Forum for Formgivningshistorie) as early as in 1982. However, biannual conferences organised by the Forum and the *Scandinavian Journal of Design History* founded in 1991 help generate some sort of community for the few design historians scattered across the Nordic countries.¹¹

The city of Milan has hosted two international conferences of the historiography of design; one entitled *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940* in 1987 and one called *Design: Storia e Storiografia* in 1991.¹² More recently, since 1999, the International Committee of Design History and Studies has organised biannual conferences, bridging activities within the various groupings mentioned above and others. Thus far, the rendezvous have been Barcelona, Havana, Istanbul, Guadalajara and Helsinki/Tallinn.

This short introductory survey of the field does not aspire to be any sort of state-of-the-art report on design history, but hopefully it manages to convey a partial picture of an academic discipline in rapid development. Before embarking upon the discussions on theoretical frameworks and methodological questions of design history, let me turn briefly to the problems regarding the subject matter of the discipline.

My interest is the history of industrial design. The general field of design history, however, is normally thought to encompass a far wider subject matter, including pre-industrial and non-industrial manufacture, and spanning e.g. graphic design, fashion, textiles, interior design, and craft. Such a diverse subject matter makes it difficult to shape a common theoretical framework and methodology. It should be fairly clear that studies of 15th century court dress and studies of 20th century automobiles have little in common in this respect. This multitude of interests is reflected in the *Journal of Design History*, and both the two most commonly known books on design history methodology—by Hazel Conway and John A. Walker—try to handle this problem.¹³ I have no intention of taking on the arduous task of following Conway and Walker in proposing universal frameworks valid for design history at large. So, in the following, my reflections on theory and methodology will refer to the history of industrial design.

9. Margolin, *op.cit.* p 131-133

10. Articles from the first volumes of *Design Issues* are compiled in Victor Margolin (ed.), *Design Discourse: History, theory, criticism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989)

11. Proceeding from the 1985 conference were published as: Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen (ed.), *Nordisk Funktionalisme 1925-1950* (København: Det danske Kunstindustrimuseum & Nordisk Forum for Formgivningshistorie, 1986) The *Scandinavian Journal of Design History* has been published since 1991 producing one issue pr. year.

12. The proceedings were published as: Anty Pansera (ed.), *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988) and Vanni Pasca and Francesco Trabucco (eds.), *Design: Storia e Storiografia* (Bologna: Progetto Leonardo, 1995)

13. I am referring to Hazel Conway (ed.), *Design History—A Student's Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987) and Walker, *op.cit.*

3.2 The heritage from art history

Even in Britain, where design history has come the farthest in the development as a distinct academic discipline, the field's origin in art history is not only acknowledged, but still felt today. As already mentioned, both Pevsner and Banham were trained in art history. But even now, when own degree programmes in design history exist,¹⁴ the heritage from art history is highly present. Even more so outside Britain, where own degree programmes in design history are very rare and many of those working in the field come from art history.

In Britain, this heritage from art history was handed down not only through the precedents established by Pevsner and Banham, but also because the new courses and programmes in design history largely were set up in departments of art history. Many of the new degree courses also combined design history with architectural and art history. Furthermore, before the Design History Society was founded in 1977, design historians met as a subgroup of the Association of Art Historians at their annual conferences.¹⁵ When Middlesex Polytechnic established the first postgraduate course in design history (masters degree), it was not only run by a department of art history, but explicitly “formulat[ed]... around approaches that were to be identified later with what became known as the ‘New Art History’.”¹⁶

Another important initiative which grew out of the same institution was the journal *Block*, established in 1979.¹⁷ Inspired by especially French social theorists like Pierre Bourdieu, Jean Baudrillard and Michael Foucault, this new journal spanned art history, cultural studies as well as design history and

argued for a rejection of prevalent and established academic approaches of art history influencing the subject in favour of radical alternatives that sought to understand the social and existential meanings of things.¹⁸

-
14. It should be mentioned, though, that the number of British degree programmes in design history may have seen its peak: In the course of the last few years, several of them have had to close due to financial problems.
 15. Walker, *op.cit.* p 17. It may be noted here that if design history and the DHS in 1977 could be considered a rebellious breakaway faction, it has now matured to the degree that it is called upon to tutor the “parent” discipline/association: In a call for papers for a session at the 2007 Association of Art Historians annual conference in Belfast, it was stated that “the Design History Society[*s] thirtieth anniversary offers a timely opportunity to review the boundary between design history and art history in both methodology and subject matter. In particular, what do current preoccupations of what might be called the ‘new design history’ have to offer art historians?”: Deborah Sugg Ryan and Timo de Rijk, *Immaterial culture? Things, artefacts and meanings* [Call for Papers] (E-mail posted to the DHS mailing list DESIGN-HISTORY@JISCMAIL.AC.UK, 26.06.2006)
 16. Jonathan M. Woodham, “Designing Design History: From Pevsner to Postmodernism” [conference paper] (delivered at the conference *Digitisation and Knowledge* at Auckland University of Technology, 14.02.2001) unpagged. For an introduction to ‘New Art History’, see: Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History—A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001)
 17. *Block* was discontinued in 1989. A selection of articles published in the journal have been compiled in: Sally Stafford, Melinda Mash, Barry Curtis, George Robertson, Jon Bird, Lisa Tickner and Tim Putnam (eds.), *The BLOCK Reader in Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996)
 18. Jonathan M. Woodham, *A Dictionary of Modern Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p 51

Despite the radical attitude and the pluralist approach, the fact remains that the majority of the editors, writers, articles and readers of *Block* were deeply rooted in art history and art studies. The journal did, however, from the very start feature some important articles presenting truly fresh perspectives on design history.¹⁹ Studies of posters, advertisements, film and television also made their way into *Block*. Thus, the journal strove to break down the traditional barriers between “low”/“commercial”/“applied” art and “fine” art, but did not seem to intended to get rid of *art* as the common denominator.²⁰

The tenacity of this approach is apparent in a 1980 article by Fran Hannah and Tim Putnam (who had joined as editor) where it was asserted that efforts at contextualization and interdisciplinarity had thus far not done design history much good:

All too often... art-conventional notions of design still pass as the substance of the subject while context amounts to eclectic dippings into new fields. Bits of business history, history of technology or social history find their way into an account without consideration of the problems proper to those histories... ‘Context’ is not really established because we are still in thrall to certain categories which present themselves as the self-evident substance of any history of design. Such notions as ‘designer’, ‘school’, ‘artefact’, ‘medium’, ‘style’, continue to be taken as starting points even when they have been the subject of critical discourse in Art History. Far from being a greener pasture free from the contradictions of Art History, Design History is in fair danger of becoming an academic backwater.²¹

Hannah and Putnam went on to claim that “[m]ost Design Historians approach the subject from an art historical or design medium background”,²² and did not seem to have high hopes of design history as a sovereign discipline. Nor did they seem to have much faith in design historians’ abilities to valuably draw on other disciplines or in the aptness of other disciplinary approaches to historical studies of design than that of art history.²³ In other words, design history was still largely presented as an *art history of design*—albeit one in dire need of revitalization and improvement.

19. Among these are: John Heskett, “Modernism and Archaism in the Third Reich” in *Block* No. 3, 1980, Tony Fry, “Design History: A Debate?” in *Block* No. 5, 1981, p 14-18, Dick Hebdige, “Object as Image: The Italian Scooter Cycle” in *Block* No. 5, 1981, p 44-64, Tony Fry, “Unpacking the Typewriter” in *Block* No. 7, 1982, p 36-47 and Philippa Goodall, “Design and Gender” in *Block* No. 9, 1983, p 50-61

20. However, this shift from “fine”/“high” to “low”/“commercial”/“applied”/“popular” was by no means massive and unisonous in the field at large. As the British art historian Jonathan Harris has stated, the majority of art historians still studied traditional subject matters made up of canonical paintings, drawings, prints, and sculpture—but the more radical of these did so in a new way, asking new questions and applying analytical apparatus highly influenced by the radical political and social criticism of the time: Harris, *op.cit.* p 19, 40 & 209. A recent case in point might be the work of American art historian Caroline A. Jones on how meaning is constructed in art. Discarding the notion of meaning as inherent to the art object ready to be disclosed by the viewer/critic, she refreshingly sees the meaning of art as a social construction—or perhaps more aptly, as a co-construction—invoking both artist (or rather, his paintings) and critic (or perhaps, his texts) (plus many other more or less peripheral actors). She even refers to the work of Bruno Latour, a persistent advocate of collective construction of meaning in science and technology. The protagonists of Jones’ case study, however, are archetypal “heroes” of conventional art history: the painter Jackson Pollock (and his paintings) and the critic Clement Greenberg: Caroline A. Jones, “Talking Pictures: Clement Greenberg’s Pollock” in Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Things That Talk—Object Lessons form Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004) p 329-373. Her reference of Latour is to: Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004)

21. Fran Hannah and Tim Putnam, “Taking Stock in Design History” in *Block* No. 3, 1980, p 26

22. *Ibid.* p 30

23. *Ibid.*

This view is consolidated in an editorial introduction to the 1996 compilation of *Block* articles where the journal's view on design history was described as an attempt to "treat design, like art, as an ideologically encoded commodity, the value and significance of which were dependent on dominant modes of consumption."²⁴ Although it was further claimed that

[t]his approach was in opposition to prevailing notions of design writing which adopted untransformed art historical notions of univocal authorship, inherent meaning and received hierarchies of value[.]²⁵

it did not challenge art history *per se* as the basis for design history. They were critical of how both design history and art history traditionally had been approached, but still saw no reason for studying design in any different manner than studying art. In fact, they saw design history as "the undergrowth of visual culture" then becoming visible from what is half sarcastically described as "the lofty vantages of art history".²⁶ This mode of expression might now be interpreted as rather condescending, insinuating that design history was a lowbrow field in which highbrow art historians could "go slumming". So, in as much as *Block* renewed design history, its contribution was that of moving from an *art history of design* to what might be called a '*new art history*' of design. I should clarify that this goes for the journal's editorial policy—the articles by e.g. John Heskett and Tony Fry suggest that contributing writers who did not come to design history from art history begged to differ.²⁷

It should be clear, then, that despite an articulated criticism of the traditional art history approach to design history represented by e.g. Pevsner, art history—albeit "new" or "radical"—has remained influential in the further development of design history. So, is this heritage from art history problematic? I for one believe that it is. Why? The simple answer is that design is not art. I should perhaps here once again stress that my concern is the history of industrial design. In this connection it is useful to recall Tomás Maldonado's statement that "industrial design is not art".²⁸ He made this remark in 1960 in the capacity of director of the German school of design Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) Ulm. The fact that Maldonado himself was an artist by training makes his statement all the more interesting. The logical consequence of accepting his assertion—as I do—is of course that since industrial design is not art, then art history can hardly be the best basis for historical studies of industrial design. Maldonado made this deduction from practice to history himself too, dismissing the design history of his day on the grounds that it ignored every sector and aspect of design that could not be squeezed into the configuration of art history.²⁹

24. Stafford, Mash, Curtis, Robertson, Bird, Tickner and Putnam (eds.), *op.cit.* p 131

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.* p 132

27. Heskett, *op.cit.* and Tony Fry, "Design History: A Debate?" in *Block* No. 5, 1981, p 14-18

28. Tomás Maldonado, "New Developments in Industry and the Training of Designers" in *Architects' Yearbook*, Vol. 9, 1960, p 176

29. Castelnuovo and Gubler, *op.cit.* p 408

I shall now briefly point to three problematic tendencies in much design history which, I believe, have arisen as a consequence of the patronage of art history. Of course, and fortunately, the bias I am depicting is by no means universal. But to a certain extent generalizations are necessary due to scope, and acceptable due to representativeness. So, in broad strokes, the three major problems of writing an art history of design are as follows: Firstly; an excessive attention to aesthetics, overshadowing the many other aspects of design. Value judgements of aesthetic quality has often been the art historian's principal selection criterion.³⁰ Secondly; a tendency of viewing designers as "artists"/"authors" and products as "creations"/"œuvres" and considering the "best" of these the primary subjects of study.³¹ Besides being highly elitist, disturbingly mythopoeic and contributing to panegyric personality cult, this bias towards creation/production also resulted in a neglect of use/consumption. Thirdly; a very restricted subject matter, largely limited to object categories which have traditionally been affiliated with art (decorative art, applied art and industrial art). In other words, design history has rarely bothered with objects that the historian did not consider to be of high aesthetic value, or objects that could not be attributed to an "author",³² or objects outside the domestic sphere. "The heroic approach" has also had a great impact when design history has moved outside the object/creator domain: there are countless studies of the "great"

-
30. The discriminatory dimension to this practice has been heavily criticised especially by design historians with an interest in the more anonymous and profane areas of design, such as e.g. that which is often labelled "engineering design". See e.g.: Enrico Castelnuovo, "For a History of Design" in Carlo Pirovano (ed. in chief), *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 1: 1750-1850 The Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Milano: Electa, 1990) p 8-11
31. Some of the reasons for and problems with this tradition are discussed at some length in: Walker, *op.cit.* p 45-63. His introduction to the topic should suggest that my connecting these problematic tendencies to the heritage from art history is warranted: "Initially, the agenda for design history was set by the precedents established by art and architectural history. And since art and architecture historians tended to construct their narratives around famous artists and masterpieces, many design historians followed suit." (p 45) This tradition is what Hazel Conway calls "The Heroic Approach", and as much as her criticism of it is highly commonsensical, it is also eloquent and to the point: "In general historical studies we no longer concentrate solely on kings and queens and battles and conquests." She goes on to state that, in contrast, "The design of goods that most people live with is important" when writing design history: Hazel Conway, "Design History Basics" in Conway (ed.), *op.cit.* p 9. Jan Michl has wielded another good argument against the personality cult of "The Heroic Approach", pointing to the collective and cumulative dimension present in most (if not all) design: Jan Michl, "On Seeing Design as Redesign—An Exploration of a Neglected Problem in Design Education" in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, 2002, p 7-23. Symptomatically, this is no new way of reasoning: David Lowenthal quotes Wilhelm von Humboldt [1836] to the fact that "No... individual can ever be purely original: 'since each has received material transmitted by earlier generations', creative activity is never 'purely innovative but rather modifies the heritage'": David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) p 70
32. Industrial products are not the product of one person's (or even a group's) sole genius. The quest of attribution, as known from art history, thus often becomes futile and uninteresting—a case in point being the first Sony *Walkman*: In the desire to pin-point its "author", it has by various commentators been attributed to at least five different persons (including Sony founders Masaru Ibuka and Akio Morita, as well as the general manager of the Sony Tape Recorder Business Division at the time, Kozo Oksone). The fact that the first *Walkman*—model no. *TPS-L2*—was launched in 1979 and hence hardly can be said to be "ancient history" only strengthens the case against personal attribution as a primary concern in design history: Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay and Keith Negus, *Doing Cultural Studies—The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage, 1997) p 42 As the authors state: "In discussing the design of the Walkman, our interest is not with *who* designed it, but with what its design embodies or represents—in other words, with how its very design 'makes meaning'." (p 62)

schools, organizations and institutions promoting “great” design, but slim pickings when it comes to studies of their more mundane or “reactionary” counterparts.³³

Despite the reservations I have already made regarding generalizations, it should be mentioned that these biases have, for a long time even, been criticised and challenged within the realm of design history as well as in the “parent discipline” of art history.³⁴ The already mentioned book by Sigfried Giedion—*Mechanization Takes Command*—may, as its subtitle *A Contribution to Anonymous History* suggests, in one way be seen as an early attempt to challenge the conventional predilection for chronicling the “great” designs by “great” (famous) designers.³⁵ In architectural history, a similar attitude was expressed by Bernard Rudofsky’s 1964 *Architecture Without Architects*.³⁶ About the same time, the American art historian George Kubler severely criticized the biography as the habitual format for art history because they notoriously overstated the significance of the personal genius.³⁷ Much in the same way, the Greek art historian Nicos Hadjinicolaou later disparaged the monographic approach because the history of art was more than the history of artists.³⁸ Ideas like these found theoretical support and inspiration in e.g. marxism, feminism, post-colonialism, semiotics and psychoanalysis and participated in forming what is now known as “The New Art History” and which, as we have seen, came to the fore e.g. on the pages of *Block*.³⁹

It should be emphasised, though, that the ‘*new art history*’ of design has produced a relatively large body of sound research. Most notable, I would argue, are the studies

-
33. There are of course exceptions. A recent and notable one is the American historian Paul Bett’s history of German design where he is equally concerned with the “heroic” organisations such as Deutche Werkbund and Bauhaus as he is with the “unheroic” organisations of the nazi-era such as Amt Schönheit der Arbeit and Kunst-Dienst: Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) especially chapter one; p 23-72
34. For instance, the British art historian Jonathan Harris has noted that “If the notion that the ‘works of art themselves’ have axiomatic qualities has been thrown into fundamental doubt because it is recognised that *any* act of description or analysis is necessarily partial and preferential, then equally doubtful now is the idea that all art historians should properly involve themselves with artefacts instead of, for example, the study of institutions such as art galleries or government funding bodies.”: But Harris acknowledges that old habits die hard: “The traditional and still predominant art-historical conception of human agency has been in terms of art’s immediate and individual producers... Authorship remains, then, a necessary but problematic idea within *both* conventional and radical art history.”: Harris, *op.cit.* p 17 & 194
35. Giedion, *op.cit.* Although the book thus can be said to be fairly “modern” in this respect, it is not equally progressive by other standards. The French sociologist Jean Baudrillard has offered a thoughtful and pertinent critique: “[T]he simultaneously formal, functional and structural analysis which Siegfried [sic] Giedion offers us—a kind of epic history of the technical object—notes the changes in social structure associated with technical development, but scarcely addresses such questions as how objects are experienced, what needs other than functional ones they answer, what mental structures are interwoven with—and contradict—their functional structures, or what cultural, infracultural or transcultural system underpins their directly experienced everydayness.”: Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996) p 4
36. Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects: a short introduction to non-pedigreed architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1964)
37. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time—Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962) p 6. Kubler also criticised the primacy of iconography in art history and took a *longue duree* approach, focusing on morphological problems in terms of seriality and sequentiality. Another interesting side to this work is that Kubler did not study only works of art, but included also tools and other utilities—a most unconventional position disposition at the time.
38. Nicos Hadjinicolaou, *Art History and Class Struggle* (London : Pluto Press, 1978) p 35-43
39. The British art historian Jonathan Harris refers to *Block* as an “important catalyst[]” in the development of radical/new art history: Harris, *op.cit.* p 16

inspired by social history and feminist history.⁴⁰ These have applied fresh perspectives on design history in terms of political views and analytic approaches, although many of them in my view still have not disengaged design history from art history.⁴¹ However, recent developments have shown an increasing acceptance of design history influenced by or written from the perspective of other disciplines. Furthermore, the last couple of decades have seen the construction of a body of research which perhaps is taking on an identity as a distinct academic discipline—a discipline where there is room for and interest in objects that the historian does not (necessarily) consider to be of high aesthetic value, objects that not necessarily can be attributed to an “author”, and objects outside the domestic sphere.⁴²

Nevertheless, the more traditional art history of design still prevails, especially in the more popular publications. A recent case in point is David Raizman’s *History of Modern Design*.⁴³ Because although some attempts are made to expand the subject matter, treating for instance transport design at some length, this book is still largely based on an art history template. Within this genre, though, it is a quite thorough, nuanced and insightful book, as it pays more attention to the social and cultural contexts of design than many other publications. But the fact remains that the author presents a design history based on the established canon of “great” designs and “great” designers.⁴⁴ He makes the occasional attempt to revise that canon by including the odd “humble” product and discussing some topics that have been frowned upon and disregarded by conventional art histories of design, but the museum pieces, celebrity designers and elitist cultures still dominate. Books like Raizman’s might leave the impression that art history proper has become more radical than the art history of design. Fortunately, there is a growing number of design historians who do not subscribe to this way of writing design history. But given the considerable momentum it seems to maintain, I find it opportune to discuss some of the issues raised above a little further—both from the perspective of a more self-contained design history and informed by other disciplines.

40. As the British design historian Cheryl Buckley put it: “Though many of [the historiographic] methods [used by design historians] are problematic for design history in general, not just a feminist design history, feminist intervention, as in other disciplines, has demarcated the basic ones.”: Cheryl Buckley, “Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1986, p 9

41. In the case of feminism, the American design historian Carma R. Gorman has in a review essay criticised some recent self-proclaimed feminist contributions to design history for being methodologically reactionary, striving to “recover” “great” female designer “heroines” from oblivion and plot them onto a disturbingly conventional and canonic chart of design history alongside their long since deified male counterparts: “familiar tales of artistic heroism have been reworded to apply to female designers rather than male fine artists, but the stories and the questions that generate them remain largely unaddressed.”: Carma R. Gorman, “Reshaping and Rethinking: Recent Feminist Scholarship on Design and Designers” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2001, p 74. A similar point has been made by the British design historian John A. Walker, arguing that “[a]lthough feminist art history does present us with an excellent body of critique and methodology, it cannot be appropriated and applied directly to design unless we treat design as if it were art.”: Walker, *op.cit.* p 205

42. Leafing through recent volumes of the *Journal of Design History* is testimony good enough.

43. David Raizman, *History of Modern Design—Graphics and Products since the Industrial Revolution* (London: Laurence King, 2003)

44. The Danish design historian Ida Engholm has elaborated on this argument in her review of Raizman’s book: Ida Engholm, “David Raizman: History of Modern Design. Graphics and products since the Industrial Revolution. Laurence King Publishing” [Book review] in *Design Research News* Vol. 10, No. 9, 2005

However, before moving on, I wish to make some last remarks on the relations between art history and design history.

The Danish art and design historian Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen posed the rhetorical question “Has Design History anything to do with Art History?”.⁴⁵ Being herself an art historian by training, her answer is hardly surprising. Whereas she recognizes one of the core problems I have identified in an art history of design by stating that “design history based on the methods of art history probably adheres to the traditional view of artefacts, so that the focus is on the process and the designer’s creative ability” and admitting that “the result has become a far too uncritical concentration on the design-historical icons”, Gelfer-Jørgensen still appear to profess an art history of design.⁴⁶

As I see it, her defence of this approach is based on two arguments: Firstly, with its traditions of studying both the near and the remote past and of paying more attention to artefacts’ properties/meanings than to their modes of manufacture/distribution, art history can serve as an antidote to what she considers to be an unhealthy bias in design history towards *industrial* design (or, as she puts it; design since the industrial revolution). This is a sound argument, and I concur with the assertion that “interesting relationships can arise traversing chronological and geographical boundaries”,⁴⁷ but I do not share her concern that design history runs the risk of becoming synonymous with industrial design history. To illustrate my point, it should suffice to quote Jeffrey L. Meikle’s address on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Design History Society:

[T]he *Journal of Design History*[‘s]... articles have ranged across time from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, and across cultures from Algeria and Japan to Hungary and Italy. It has entertained discussions of Betty Boop and Le Corbusier, Harley-Davidson and Charles Babbage, and devoted special issues to craft, to graphic design and to green design. Most important, the Journal has remained open to a wide range of theory and method—narrative history, intellectual history, economics, stylistic analysis, anthropology, culture studies, reader-response theory and documentary—thereby encouraging authors and readers to accept the widest possible definition of design history.⁴⁸

Furthermore, as I have already stated, my interest happens to be precisely the history of industrial design—the area within design history I would argue has the least to do with art history. Gelfer-Jørgensen’s second argument for an art history of design is that

[w]hat links art history and design history is the fact that no discourse, no theoretical approach can ever replace the need to consider the actual core of the area, that is to say the artefact.⁴⁹

45. Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen, “Has Design History anything to do with Art History?” in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, 2001, p 17(-21)

46. *Ibid.* p 19

47. *Ibid.* p 18

48. The address was published as: Jeffrey L. Meikle, “Material Virtues: on the Ideal and the Real in Design History” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998, p 191-192

49. Gelfer-Jørgensen, *op.cit.* p 20

Again, I fully agree that the artefacts themselves constitute essential sources in design history, and that this is a concern shared by art history. The analogy is not complete, though, because—as John A. Walker has noted—“since *function* is a key aspect of design, ideally goods should be *used* as well as scrutinized.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, art history is not by any means the only discipline that shares design history’s concern with artefacts as sources—so does e.g. the history of technology, history of science, archaeology and material culture studies.⁵¹ And, I would argue, many of the ways these fields study and interpret artefacts may be more rewarding to (industrial) design history than those cultivated within art history—be that “new”/“radical” or not.⁵²

It is hard to disagree that “design history [has some]thing to do with art history”—much like design, even the majority of industrial design, clearly has “something to do with” artistic aspects (which is a far cry from claiming that design is art).⁵³ Attempting to purge design history of every trace of art history heritage would thus decisively be an ill turn. This fact should not, in my opinion, preclude the search for alternative, additional and complementary references in the development of an epistemological, theoretical and methodological fundament for design history. Because, as the Australian design historian and theoretician Tony Fry wrote in *Block* replying to the above mentioned article by Fran Hannah and Tim Putnam:

Viewing design outside the shadow of ‘art’, it is important to proceed on a basis of the ‘aesthetic’ being of variable significance and not always an essential feature of the design object.⁵⁴

-
50. Walker, *op.cit.* p 5. The importance of “hands-on” experience in the writing of design history is also discussed in: Meikle, *op.cit.* p 193-194. Similarly, the American historian Joseph J. Corn has “call[ed] attention to a scholarly practice that understates what historians of technology learn from objects”, focusing especially on how actual handling of artifacts—although such experiences are rarely documented by researchers and thus hard to trace—“have shaped our historical questions and interpretations.”: Joseph J. Corn, “Object Lessons/Object Myths? What Historians of Technology Learn from Things” in W. David Kingery (ed.), *Learning From Things—Method and Material of Material Culture Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996) p 46 & 49
51. The artefact as source has been widely discussed in several of these fields and has resulted in some interesting publications like e.g.: Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery (eds.), *History From Things—Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), Kingery (ed.), *op.cit.*, Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994) and Lorraine Daston (ed.), *Things That Talk—Object Lessons form Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004)
52. As the American historians of technology Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery have claimed, “Only a small minority of art historians have investigated beneath the perceived surfaces of the artifacts, and most have placed the artistic creations of the past in a category separate from less purely aesthetic creations.”: Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, “Introduction” in Lubar and Kingery (eds.), *op.cit.* p ix
53. The meeting points and similarities between art and design seem to be most conspicuous within the realm of what Peter Dormer has called “high design”, i.e. elitist, exclusive design—but not even here is the analogy unproblematic: “There are important differences between the economic framework within which art, as opposed to design, generally operates, but the economic structure and the ambitions of artists and designers sometimes overlap in high design and fine craft. High design and craft are both areas in which exclusivity is a commodity and where high prices are charged for objects whose aesthetic value may only be recognizable to the cognoscenti.”: Peter Dormer, *The Meanings of Modern Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990) p 10
54. Fry, *op.cit.* p 14

Therefore, Fry states his “reservations as to the centrality of aesthetic evaluation in addressing some of the social constructions of the design object.”⁵⁵ His further warning that

Unless we acknowledge design beyond the aesthetic, and the social transformation of design—not only does the topic of Design History become a political hobby for winter evenings, it also becomes politically impotent for contemporary or future use in increasing our understanding of design⁵⁶

may seem a bit exaggerated today, but I still believe it to be an important reminder. And although I appreciate that art history has much more to offer than aesthetic analysis, and although the field of design history has since matured considerably, it is worth mentioning that even today—24 years after Fry’s harsh criticism—a grand old man of design history such as John Heskett still finds it necessary to demand “design [history] to be moved out of the shadow of art history”.⁵⁷

3.3 Industrial design history

Even though we all know well that the “historic avant-gardes” from the beginning of the [20th] century—futurism, cubism, purism, prounism, constructivism, De Stijl etc.—have been of vital importance for the subsequent development of the visual arts—and thus not only painting and sculpture but also architecture and furnishing—I do not believe, to be honest, that the study of these movements are worth much when it comes to the industrially produced object.⁵⁸

These words by the acclaimed Italian art historian and design critic Gillo Dorfles, uttered at a 1987 design history conference in Milan, are well suited to illustrate a shift of attention towards a more specific discussion. In spite of the severely restricted extent of the outline presented above, the broad lines of the formation of design history as a discipline and some of the principal problems regarding its heritage from art history should be clear by now. Of course—and I hope I have stressed this enough—art history is more than the study of avant-gardes. Nevertheless, I find Dorfles’ assertion to be the historian’s logical consequence of Tomás Maldonado’s statement that “industrial design is not art”⁵⁹—i.e. that industrial design history is not art history. In the following, then, I

55. *Ibid.* p 16

56. *Ibid.* p 15

57. John Heskett, “Some lessons of design history” in Astrid Skjerven (ed.), *Designkompetanse—Utvikling, forskning og undervisning* (Oslo: Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo, 2005) p 12

58. Gillo Dorfles, “Introduzione” in Pansera (ed.), *op.cit.* p 3 (“Anche se siamo tutti ben coscienti che le “avanguardie storiche” dell’inizio del secolo—futurismo, cubismo, purismo, prounismo, costruttivismo, De Stijl ecc.—hanno avuto un peso determinante per il successivo sviluppo delle arti visive—e dunque non solo di pittura e di scultura ma anche di architettura e arredamento—non credo, a dire il vero, che lo studio di questi movimenti conto più che tanto per quanto concerne l’oggetto industrialmente prodotto.”)

59. Maldonado, *op.cit.*

shall outline some of the attempts at advocating the writing of an industrial design history more on its own terms that have been made during the last couple of decades.

One of the first attempts at writing a survey history of design that was not based on “museum pieces” or a canon derived from art history was the 1980 book *Industrial Design* by the British design historian John Heskett. Here he strongly criticized what he perceived as the formalist methodology of conventional art history of design for performing an iconology of objects which disregarded or greatly underestimated the various circumstances of their production and use.⁶⁰ But he also cautioned against what he saw as a potential contextual determinism of the recent (1970s) trend towards social histories of art and design.⁶¹ Seeking to portray 200 years of historical development in 200 pages, Heskett’s book shares many of the problems generally associated with survey books in terms of case selections, emphasis, etc. But its strong standing is nonetheless deserved, due to a refreshingly balanced representation. Its chief merit, though, is that it is an attempt at writing a history of industrial design on its own terms rather than as an art history of design. In other words: Heskett writes industrial design history—not industrial art history.⁶²

Heskett was neither the first nor the only one struggling to construct an industrial design history less dependent on the art history template. The last two or three decades have seen the publication of many such works in the format of monographs on national or international survey histories of industrial design. Amongst these are books by authors such as the German Gert Selle, the Brits Penny Sparke and Jonathan M. Woodham, the Australian Tony Fry, the Italians Paolo Fossati and Anty Pansera, and the American Jeffrey L. Meikle—to name but a few.⁶³ Any individual historiographic analysis of these books is of course not possible here. This omission may perhaps obscure their at times considerable differences in many respects, but they have, I believe, one important common trait that merits my mentioning them, however briefly and inadequately: They all aspire to an understanding of industrial design on its own terms rather than as some sort of “industrial/decorative/applied art”. The major achievement of books like these, then, is that they represent a growing body of literature on genuine industrial design

60. As Heskett also points out, this de-contextualised treatment of objects is particularly common in museums. This is also what led Theodor Adorno to declare that “Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. They testify to the neutralization of culture.” When an object is placed in a museum (especially when put in a showcase or on a pedestal) it is severed from its contexts, it becomes meaningless and dead—like an embalmed body: Theodor Adorno, “Valéry Proust Museum,” in Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), 175. For a discussion of this problem, see: Neil Cummings and Marysia Lewandowska, *The Value of Things* (London/Basel: August/Birkhäuser, 2000)

61. John Heskett, *Industrial Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980) p 7-9

62. All the more ironic, then, that the book is published as part of a series called “world of art”.

63. See e.g.: Gert Selle, *Die Geschichte des Design in Deutschland von 1870 bis heute—Entwicklung der industriellen Produktkultur* (Köln: DuMont, 1978), Penny Sparke, *Consultant Design—The History and Practice of the Designer in Industry* (London: Pembroke Press, 1983), Penny Sparke, *An Introduction to Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), Jonathan M. Woodham, *The Industrial Designer and the Public* (London: Pembroke, 1983), Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Tony Fry, *Design History Australia* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1988), Paolo Fossati, *Il Design in Italia 1945-1972* (Torino: Einaudi, 1972), Anty Pansera, *Storia del Disegno Industriale Italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1993), Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1979) and Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Design in the USA* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005)

history. Surely, survey histories intended for a broad audience are rarely the place to look for the most progressive research in any discipline. If the discussion had been shifted towards publications dealing with more particular subject matters and more unconventional delimitations, we would find more radical and challenging ways of writing industrial design history. Conducting such a discussion is, however, a far too arduous and comprehensive task for the present context.

Heskett's advocacy of an industrial design history on its own terms is carried on in his contribution to the 1987 design history primer edited by Hazel Conway. Here Heskett states that

Industrial products are... elements of our material culture, tangible expressions of individual and social values. This means objects cannot be studied simply in terms of visual characteristics and qualities, or as ends in themselves. Instead, visual analysis needs to be supplemented by questions exploring wider reaches of meaning.⁶⁴

Elaborating on where such "wider reaches of meaning" should be sought, Heskett identifies two basic contexts; the contexts of production and the contexts of use and consumption. Like conventional art history, design history has traditionally focused much more on production than consumption. In addition to exploring the neglected sphere of consumption as a subject field, Heskett argues that design history must broaden its horizon also when regarding the sphere of production in order to elude the all too often myopic studies of design processes and the resulting mythopoeia. Furthermore, he claims, there is much to benefit from combining the spheres of production and consumption in studies of industrial design history.⁶⁵

This point has also made by two other British design historians, John A. Walker⁶⁶ and Grace Lees-Maffei—the latter, concerned with advice literature as design historical sources, claiming that

Currently, design history is becoming increasingly preoccupied with *mediation* as a point on the continuum providing a focus for studies attentive to both production and consumption [my italics].⁶⁷

Similarly, seeing flaws with both the traditional production oriented and the newer consumption oriented approach, the Dutch historians of technology Johan Schot and Adri Albert de la Bruheze have outlined a perspective built on "a focus on the mediation process between production and consumption", a process they define as one of "mutual articulation and alignment of product characteristics and user requirements."⁶⁸ Studying

64. John Heskett, "Industrial Design" in Conway (ed.), *op.cit.* p 112

65. *Ibid.* p 112-113. The importance of studying the dialectical relations between production and consumption has been stressed also by the British design historians Suzette Worden and Jill Seddon: "[A]n understanding of consumption has a role within any analysis of production and... the connections between the two need to be continually addressed from both positions.": Suzette Worden and Jill Seddon, "Women Designers in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s: Defining the Professional and Redefining Design" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1995 p 177

66. Walker, *op.cit.* p 27, 70 & 174-185

67. Grace Lees-Maffei, "Studying Advice: Historiography, Methodology, Commentary, Bibliography" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2003 p 3

such arenas of mediation is in my view a fertile strategy for better understanding the negotiations not only between production and consumption, but also between ideology and pragmatism, between theory and practice.

For design history to rise above the mere connoisseurship represented by the myopic “artists”/“œuvres” approach Heskett asserts,

a wider range of investigation [is required]. This may involve business structures, professional and industrial organization, economic and political policy, social influence and impact, which should enlarge and enhance understanding of the design process and designed artefacts. To emphasize the latter as an autonomous activity is to ignore the element of social formation and effect in industrial design. Conversely, however, to reduce human creativity simply to an expression of social or material factors is to diminish this essential feature of our humanity.⁶⁹

A topic which is easily derived from the concern for use and consumption is an interest in the kind of objects actually used by the majority of consumers—it should be fairly evident that these are not necessarily identical to the ones favoured and promoted by the design elites. This concern for “democratic” design, then, is closely related to the issue of selection criteria governing industrial design history’s subject matter.

I have above discussed the criticism of how the “creations”/“œuvres” tradition inherited from art history has created a problematic bias in the selection of objects to be studied in mainstream design history. As mentioned, I believe this tradition to be largely responsible for the ignorance of a vast range of object categories outside the domestic sphere and an equally vast array of objects not conforming to the (aesthetic) canon of “high design”. Many design historians—including e.g. John Heskett, John A. Walker, Hazel Conway, Rainer Wick, Frederik Wildhagen, Peter Dormer and Jonathan M. Woodham—have pointed out this problem and argued for an industrial design history more focused on everyday objects.⁷⁰ Making a case for why design history should shun value judgement as selection criteria, the British design historian Judy Attfield has gone so far as to claim that “[t]he material culture of Modernity in the [post-WW II] reconstruction period was in distinct contrast to the theory of good design”.⁷¹ However, such a strategy requires more than just incorporating new objects in the subject field of design history. As Attfield has noted, it is important that popular design that does not conform to “good design” is studied on its own terms and not just as a contrast to elite

68. Johan Schot and Adri Albert de la Bruheze, “The Mediated Design of Products, Consumption, and Consumers in the Twentieth Century” in Nelly Oudshoorn and Trevor Pinch (eds.), *How Users Matter—The Co-Construction of Users and Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003) p 230

69. Heskett, *op.cit.* p 125

70. *Ibid.* p 124, Walker, *op.cit.* p 33 & 62-63, Conway, *op.cit.* p 9, Rainer Wick, “Critical observations and general remarks about design history” in Anty Pansera (ed.), *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L’Arca, 1988) p 45-46, Fredrik Wildhagen, “Flodhesten, Gullfisken og Kristine Valdresdatter—Streamlining og designhistorien” in Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen (ed.), *Nordisk Funktionalisme 1925-1950* (København: Det danske Kunstinstitut & Nordisk Forum for Formgivningshistorie, 1986) p 55, Frederik Wildhagen, “Towards a methodology of design history” in Pansera (ed.), *op.cit.* p 18 & app., Dormer, *op.cit.* p 23 and Woodham, *op.cit.* p 205

71. Judy Attfield, “Fascinating fitness: the dangers of good design” in Judy Attfield, *Bringing Modernity Home—Writings on Popular Design and Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) p 39

design. It must be “interpret[ed]... from perspectives beyond the limits set by the ‘good design’ critique.”⁷² The German design historian Gert Selle has made a similar point, calling for a design historical approach that would

make it possible to understand other people’s positions and values. A sort of social-esthetic empathy would be needed in situations in which old, internalized value systems again and again play tricks on us.⁷³

There are good examples of industrial design histories of mundane, affordable, commonplace objects—i.e. “democratic” design—but I believe it is still necessary to encourage this trend.⁷⁴

Attfield’s above comment indicates a shift of focus from *what* to research in industrial design history to *how* to research industrial design history which is worth pursuing for a while. As the American design historians David Raizman and Carma R. Gorman put it:

Expanding and strengthening the field of design history requires not only judicious selection of the objects to be considered, but also careful attention to the sources and methods used to study them.⁷⁵

There is nothing wrong *per se* in studying artefacts—be they humble or dazzling. What matters more is the approach; the way in which we engage the objects and to what purpose. This principle has been brilliantly expressed by the Italian writer Italo Calvino: “You don’t relish a city’s seven or seventy-seven marvels, but the answer it gives to your question.” (“*D’una città non godi le sette o settantasette meraviglie, ma la risposta che dà a una tua domanda.*”)⁷⁶ Calvino’s inspiring tenet can be read as a warning to historians of material culture not to become fetishists and idolaters.

The Norwegian design historian Frederik Wildhagen has also questioned “the inclination towards the chic cult object... [which] solely indicates a preference among [sic] a limited number of a MoMA-oriented clique of object-gourmets” and criticised that this connoisseurship nevertheless “tends to have the major support from writers in the field.”⁷⁷ Much has happened in the two decades that have passed since Wildhagen

72. Judy Attfield, “‘Give ‘em something dark and heavy’: The Role of Design in the Material Culture of Popular British Furniture, 1939-1965” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 9, No. 3, 1996, p 185

73. Gert Selle, “There is No Kitsch, There is Only Design!” in *Design Issues* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1984, p 49

74. To name but two monograph examples: Henry Petroski, *The Pencil—A History of Design and Circumstance* (New York: Knopf, 1989) and Alison J. Clarke, *Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America* (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999). One could perhaps argue that Tupperware is too iconic and too acknowledged in elite design circles to serve as an example here. Surely, great custodians of elite design such as the New York’s Museum of Modern Art and London’s Victoria and Albert Museum have gone a long way in canonizing Tupperware. “However,” as Clarke writes, “Tupperware’s significance as a twentieth-century artifact is better explained by references to the iconic status of the product in popular culture from the 1950s to present day, ranging from sitcoms and cartoon strips to cult magazines and Hollywood films.” (p 3-4) So, although the cultural elites of MoMA and V&A from time to time “go slumming” in the shanty town of commonplace plastic utensils, this has by no means disqualified Tupperware as a subject matter for a history of “democratic” design.

75. David Raizman and Carma R. Gorman, “Introduction” in David Raizman and Carma R. Gorman (eds.), *Objects, Audiences, and Literatures—Alternative Narratives in the History of Design* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) p x

76. Italo Calvino, *Le città invisibili* (Torino: Einaudi, 1972) p 44

aired his frustrations, but I still consider his words a poignant reminder. It is worth noting, though, precisely because Wildhagen is so critical of the traditional art history of design, pointing to several of its shortcomings both in terms of subject matter and methodology, and arguing for a “differentiating between a history of design and one of decorative art”,⁷⁸ that he still chose to treat industrial design and handicraft as interwoven in his 1988 book *Norge i form*.⁷⁹

Perhaps more interestingly, though, is that he in his quest for a more appropriate theoretical and methodological base for design history has advocated a departure from an art history of design because of what he describes as

the need to find a balanced interdisciplinary approach to counteract the art historical approach of an almost unilateral aesthetic evaluation of design, but more than anything to reflect the interdisciplinary character of design itself.⁸⁰

Among the disciplines Wildhagen invites to this quest for “a balanced interdisciplinary approach” is the history of technology.⁸¹ In the advocacy of interdisciplinarity, Wildhagen is backed by his German colleague Rainer Wick who deems this strategy “quite obvious” and proposes design history as

an intersection of different disciplines, as for instance the history of ideas and ideologies, the history of science and technology, the history of economy and sociology and also of the history of art, as *one* among the others.⁸²

More importantly, though, Wick is weary of what he considers to be a common practice; mock interdisciplinarity—and makes demands of a true interdisciplinarity:

It is not sufficient to take these disciplines into consideration caustically in order to illustrate or outline one or the other problem or sketch out a “general background”; rather, these disciplines should *systematically* participate in developing a design history that does not want to be squeezed into the corset of a purely art-oriented way of looking at things.⁸³

It should soon become clear that I agree with both Wildhagen and Wick on these accounts.

Interdisciplinarity was paramount also in the editorial policy of the *Journal of Design History* from its very beginning in 1988. The editorial policy as presented in the first issue proclaimed that

The *Journal of Design History*... aims to help consolidate design history as a distinct discipline but it will not be narrowly specialist in content or sectarian in tone. The

77. Wildhagen, *op.cit.* app. p 10

78. *Ibid.* p 19

79. Fredrik Wildhagen, *Norge i Form—Kunsthåndverk og design under industrikulturen* (Oslo: J.M. Stenersen, 1988)

80. Frederik Wildhagen, “Towards a methodology of design history” in Pansera (ed.), *op.cit.* p 19

81. It is interesting to note, then, that the British art historian Michael Tucker in his review of Wildhagen’s book criticised it for providing insufficient “socio-historical flesh”, i.e. for its *unbalanced* interdisciplinarity: Michael Tucker, “Norge I Form: Kunsthåndverk og Design under Industrikulturen” [book review] in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 2, No. 2/3, 1989, p 237

82. Wick, *op.cit.* p 45

83. *Ibid.*

widespread recognition of the cultural significance and economic importance of design will provide a broad base on which to build and the Journal seeks to promote links with other disciplines exploring material culture, such as anthropology, architectural history, business history, cultural studies, design management studies, economic and social history, history of science and technology, and sociology.⁸⁴

The ambitions of the editors thus coincide nicely with my view of what constitutes a sound basis for the history of industrial design. It is worth noting, though, that the *Journal of Design History* is not a journal of industrial design history. This was heralded from the start in the editorial policy stating that “the editors seek encourage contributions on design in pre-industrial periods”⁸⁵ and confirmed by the above quote from Jeffrey L. Meikle’s address on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Design History Society in 1997 regarding the multitude of topics represented in the Journal’s first decade.⁸⁶ Many sound arguments can be made in favour of this policy, but the vast topical heterogeneity may also at times be overwhelming.⁸⁷ Because of this, I feel free to be rather eclectic in my reading of the *Journal of Design History*, leaving pre-industrial and non-industrial design aside. The remainder of this section, then, will discuss some of the more explicit attempts at contributing to the development of the theoretical frameworks and methodological tools of an industrial design history—from both the *Journal of Design History* and other relevant fora.

Already from the first issue, the *Journal* proved capable of breaking the mould of conventional art history of (industrial) design. Tim Putnam, member of the editorial board of both *Block* and the new *Journal of Design History* and a social scientist by

84. *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1988 p U2

85. *Ibid.*

86. Jeffrey L. Meikle, “Material Virtues: on the Ideal and the Real in Design History” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998, p 191-192

87. In his proposal for a “world history of design” the American design historian Victor Margolin has argued that a demarcation of the field of study to industrialized societies results in a parochialism ignorant of vast parts of design practice. This is of course true of the field of design history as a whole, but I still find it legitimate and reasonable to make this discrimination for individual (or groups of) scholars and studies because industrialization remains an actual and significant demarcation in history, society and culture: Victor Margolin, “A World History of Design and the History of the World” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005 p 235-243. A more pressing concern, then, has been voiced by the Australian design historian Tony Fry, stating that also within industrial design history there is still a problematic bias towards the “old”/“Western” industrialised societies, resulting in a marginalisation of problems indigenous to other regions of the (industrialized) world: Tony Fry, “A Geography of Power: Design History and Marginality” in Victor Margolin and Richard Buchanan (eds.), *The Idea of Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995) p 204-218 [Originally published in *Design Issues*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1989 p 15-30]. This challenge is being met, though, as design historians from more recently industrialized societies such as e.g. Cuba, Turkey and India are joining the international research community. The recent biannual conferences organized by the International Committee of Design History and Studies (ICDHS) (Barcelona 1999, Havana 2000, Istanbul 2002, Guadalajara 2004 and Helsinki/Tallinn 2006) have been important in this development, attracting delegates and topics beyond “the usual suspects”. For a survey of the geographical distribution of design historical research presented at first four of these events and elsewhere and a discussion of problems and possibilities regarding the exploration/expansion of the world atlas of design history, see: Jonathan M. Woodham, “Local, National and Global: Redrawing the Design Historical Map” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005 p 257-267. For a discussion of epistemological and terminological questions following this interest in the geography of design history, e.g. the validity of concepts such as peripherality and marginality, see: Anna Calvera, “Local, Regional, National, Global and Feedback: Several Issues To Be Faced With Constructing Regional Narratives” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2005 p 371-383

training, presented a case study of transformations of the design process at Brown & Sharpe, an American machine-tool manufacturer, in the late 19th century.⁸⁸ The article is interesting for two reasons: Firstly because such engineering design was (and still is) highly underrepresented in industrial design history, at least beyond the mythopoeic anecdotes on “heroes” such as Samuel Colt, Isaac Singer, Henry Ford, *et al.* emulated from the history of technology. Secondly, and more interestingly, is the point Putnam made regarding the nature of transformations of the design process—that their essential feature was organizational rather than personal.⁸⁹ In other words, Putnam argued for a greater attention to studies of design management and process organization rather than the usual musings on individual creative agency. However, Putnam’s strong emphasis on structure may seem a bit one-sided, resulting in a rather rigid model of the process.

Since then, the *Journal of Design History* has presented a variety of takes on industrial design history, ranging from articles approaching the history of ideas⁹⁰ via studies of economic and political history⁹¹ to those exploring post-colonial,⁹² feminist/social⁹³ and cultural⁹⁴ histories as well as the history of technology⁹⁵ and business history.⁹⁶ Others have explored the—more or less immediate—potential of methodological traditions such as ethnology⁹⁷ and psychoanalysis.⁹⁸ Unconventional

88. Tim Putnam, “The Theory of Machine Design in the Second Industrial Age” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1988 p 25-34

89. *Ibid.* p 29

90. See e.g.: Robin Kinross, “Herbert Read’s “Art and Industry”: A History” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1988 p 35-50, Madge, *op.cit.* p 113-126 and Steve Edwards, “Factory and Fantasy in Andrew Ure” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2001 p17-33

91. See e.g.: Paddy Maguire, “Designs on Reconstruction: British Business, Market Structures and the Role of Design in Post-War Recovery” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1991 p 15-30, Paddy Maguire, “Craft Capitalism and the Projection of British Industry in the 1950s and 1960s” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993 p 97-113, David Crowley, “Building the World Anew: Design in Stalinist and Post-Stalinist Poland” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1994 p 187-203, Guy Julier, “Barcelona Design, Catalonia’s Political Economy, and the New Spain, 1980-1986” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1996 p 117-127 and Eli Rubin, “The Form of Socialism without Ornament—Consumption, Ideology, and the Fall and Rise of Modernist Design in the German Democratic Republic” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2006 p 155-168

92. See e.g.: H. Kumar Vyas, “The Designer and the Socio-Technology of Small Production” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1991 p 187-210, H. Alpay Er, “Development Patterns of Industrial Design in the Third World: A Conceptual Model for Newly Industrialized Countries” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997 p 293-307 and Lucila Fernández Uriarte, “Modernity and Postmodernity from Cuba” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005 p 245-255

93. See e.g. Cheryl Buckley, “The Noblesse of the Banks’: Craft Hierarchies, Gender Divisions, and the Roles of Women Paintresses and Designers in the British Pottery Industry 1890-1939” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1989 p 257-273, Cheryl Buckley, “Design, Femininity, and Modernism: Interpreting the Work of Susie Cooper” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1994 p 277-293 and Worden and Seddon, *op.cit.* p 177-193. Although Worden and Seddon here express their dismay that “general histories of design all too easily decontextualize designers as ‘heroes’”, they still insist on a rather conventional methodology consisting of “a reappraisal of the tools of biography and attribution” (p 177). Their acknowledgment of the potential pitfalls of these methodological tools is commendable, but despite their intention the article’s emphasis on the potency of individual (women) actors is in my opinion dangerously close to “the heroic approach”—albeit in a revised version seeking to include women in the design historical canon.

94. See e.g.: Peter Stanfield, “Heritage Design: The Harley-Davidson Motor Company” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1992 p 141-155 and Jeffrey L. Meikle, “Into the Fourth Kingdom: Representations of Plastic Materials, 1920-1950” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1992 p 173-182

subjects such as the legal matters of designs (intellectual property problems),⁹⁹ aviation design,¹⁰⁰ participative design processes,¹⁰¹ eco-design,¹⁰² “period” furniture,¹⁰³ consumption,¹⁰⁴ propaganda films and tv,¹⁰⁵ toys,¹⁰⁶ import trading,¹⁰⁷ bicycles,¹⁰⁸ packaging,¹⁰⁹ product photography,¹¹⁰ computers,¹¹¹ artificial limbs¹¹² and DIY boat building¹¹³ have been probed. The vast variety of themes and approaches represented here makes it hard to consider this body of research *en bloc*. But in all their diversity these studies have sought to challenge many of the problematic aspects of conventional design history discussed above. It should be clear by now, then, that there is a strong and growing trajectory of industrial design history that has superseded or at least supplemented the tradition I have previously dubbed the (*new*) *art history of design*.

-
95. See e.g. Louise Purbrick, “The Dream Machine: Charles Babbage and His Imaginary Computers” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1993 p 9-23. It might be mentioned here that a special issue on the history of technology was announced for vol. 3 (1990), but this never materialized: *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 3/4, 1988 p 258. However, a special issue on *Technology and the Body* appeared in 2001 and included e.g. Arwen P. Mohun, “Designed for Thrills and Safety: Amusement Parks and the Commodification of Risk, 1880-1929” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001 p 291-306 and Douglas N. Lantry, “Dress for Egress: The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum’s Apollo Spacesuit Collection” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001 p 343-359
96. Sally Clarke, “Managing Design: The Art and Colour Section at General Motors, 1927-1941” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1999 p 65-79. As a Norwegian, I cannot resist the temptation of pointing out that this article features an alluring picture of Sonja Henie—one of Norway’s few international celebrities; three times Olympic figure skating champion (1928, 1932 & 1936) and later Hollywood diva—posing in one of the most spectacular cars of the 1930s: the 1936 Auburn Cord 810 designed by Gordon Buehrig (p 74).
97. Gertrud Øllgaard, “A Super-Elliptical Moment in the Cultural Form of the Table: A Case Study of a Danish Table” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1999 p 143-157 and Pauline Garvey, “How to Have a ‘Good Home’—The Practical Aesthetic and Normativity in Norway” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2003 p 241-251
98. Jane Graves, “‘When Things Go Wrong... inside the inside’: A Psychoanalytical History of a Jug” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1999 p 357-367
99. Otakar Mácel, “Avant-Garde Design and the Law: Litigation over the Cantilever Chair” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 3, No. 2/3, 1990 p 125-143. Despite the potentially interesting subject of this article it is, in my view, severely hampered by the author’s disappointingly conventional intention (stated explicitly in the introduction) which was not so much to shed light on the problems of patents and intellectual property as historical phenomena, but mainly to establish the “true” authorships and attributions of a chair type (was Mart Stam, Marcel Breuer or Ludwig Mies van der Rohe the greater genius?) The article does, however—despite it being seemingly a means more than an end—provide an interesting report of how the legal dispute and the copyright issue pivoted on whether the design in legal terms was to be considered an artistic creation or a technical innovation. Questions regarding copyright legislation are also discussed in: Katie Scott, “Art and Industry—A Contradictory Union: Authors, Rights and Copyrights during the *Consulat*” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000 p 1-21
100. Frank Jackson, “The New Air Age: BOAC and Design Policy 1945-60” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1991 p 167-185 and Kenneth Agnew, “The Spitfire: Legend or History? An Argument for a New Research Culture in Design” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993 p 121-130
101. Philip Pacey, “‘Anyone Designing Anything?’ Non-Professional Designers and the History of Design” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1992 p 217-225
102. Pauline Madge, “Design, Ecology, Technology: A Historiographical Review” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1993 p 149-166

3.4 Design *history* or *design* history?

More explicit discussions on the theory and methodology of design history are relatively sparse, but have surfaced from time to time in fora like the *Journal of Design History*, *Design Issues* and *Design Studies*. One of the seminal texts in this respect is the British design historian Clive Dilnot's two-part essay written for the first volume of *Design Issues* in 1984.¹¹⁴ Although it seems motivated by a desire to relate design history to present day design practice (and education) and thus giving the essay a strangely instrumental and legitimatizing flair,¹¹⁵ the arguments put forth are well-informed and largely relevant today, over two decades later. Dilnot's approach is primarily historiographic (at least in Part I), but many important theoretical and methodological issues (particularly in Part II) are raised as well. The essay's most poignant contribution is in my view the warning against "the very real possibility of turning the writing of [design] history into the writing of myth" where the author draws on the French philosopher Roland Barthes' influential study of mythology.¹¹⁶ This critique is linked with his aversion for the in his opinion lingering but long overdue presence of pevsnerian legitimatizing design history. Given the amount and character of research produced after 1984—e.g. that briefly outlined above—this latter point may seem somewhat dated today,

103. Atfield, *op.cit.* 185-201

104. John Benson, "Working-Class Consumption, Saving, and Investment in England and Wales, 1851-1911" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1996 p 87-99, Colin Campbell, "Consumption and the Rhetorics of Need and Want" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998 p 235-246, Victoria Kelley, "The Equitable Consumer: Shopping at the Co-Op in Manchester" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1998 p 295-310, Viviana Narotzky, "'A Different and New Refinement'—Design in Barcelona, 1960-1990" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2000 p 227-243 and Susie McKellar, "'Seals of Approval'—Consumer Representation in 1930s' America" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2002 p 1-13

105. Jonathan M. Woodham, "Managing British Design Reform II: The Film "Deadly Lampshade": An Ill-Fated Episode in the Politics of 'Good Taste'" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1996 p 101-115 and Michelle Jones, "Design and the Domestic Persuader—Television and the British Broadcasting Corporation's Promotion of Post-war 'Good Design'" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2003 p 307-318

106. Anthony Burton, "Design History and the History of Toys: Defining a Discipline for the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1997 p 1-21 and Kenneth D. Brown, "Design in the British Toy Industry Since 1945" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1998 p 323-333

107. Kevin Davies, "Scandinavian Furniture in Britain: Finmar and the UK Market, 1949-1952" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1997 p 39-52

108. O. A. van Nierop, A. C. M. Blankendaal and C. J. Overbeeke, "The Evolution of the Bicycle: A Dynamic Systems Approach" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997 p 253-267

109. Glenn Porter, "Cultural Forces and Commercial Constraints: Designing Packaging in the Twentieth-Century United States" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1999 p 25-43

110. Catherine Moriarty, "A Backroom Service?—The Photographic Library of the Council of Industrial Design, 1945-1965" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000 p 39-57

111. Paul Atkinson, "The (In)Difference Engine—Explaining the Disappearance of Diversity in the Design of the Personal Computer" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000 p 59-72 and Paul Atkinson, "Man in a Briefcase: The Social Construction of the Laptop Computer and the Emergence of a Type Form" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2005 p 191-205

112. Mary Guyatt, "Better Legs: Artificial Limbs for British Veterans of the First World War" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001 p 307-325

113. Andrew Jackson, "Labour as Leisure-The Mirror Dinghy and DIY Sailors" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2006 p 57-67

114. Clive Dilnot, "The State of Design History, Part I" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1984, p 3-23 and Clive Dilnot, "The State of Design History, Part II" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1984, p 3-20

but—as is also noted above—this criticism still applies to much of the more popular writings on design history. The same can probably be said also about Dilnot’s most fundamental objection against (conventional) design history; that it has dodged “methodological inquiry and theoretical self-reflection” resulting in an unsatisfactory dominion of “self-evident empiricism”.¹¹⁷

Another interesting early *Design Issues* article is a 1986 feminist critique by the British design historian Cheryl Buckley. Drawing on feminist history and feminist art history she called attention to a series of deficiencies and problems in conventional design history, such as the primacy of aesthetic values, the obsession with “good design” and the “great”/“heroic” individual designer, the prioritisation of production (or rather: creation) over consumption and of professional capitalist production over amateur domestic production. Opting for a more progressive design history, Buckley calls for a historiography and methodology that acknowledges the complex social construction of both design, its users and meanings.¹¹⁸ Although Buckley’s expressed aim may seem a bit narrow; “to develop a history that does not automatically exclude women”,¹¹⁹ her

115. Although in a note, Dilnot does consider the possibility that “There might be considerable value in a study which for once broke with the conventional link of design history to design practice, and inquired instead what possible contributions design history might make to academic issues in general.”: *Ibid.* p 8 (note 32). I for one would assert that design history is and should be an academic discipline (or at least an academic activity and field) in its own right on par with other histories and that it is not design history’s primary concern to inform design practice (through the education of designers or otherwise).

116. *Ibid.* p 6. Dilnot takes his queue from Barthes in: Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1973) esp. the essay “Myth Today”, p 109-159. For some interesting recent examples of explicitly mythoclastic design history, see: Simon Jackson, “The “Stump-jumpers:” National Identity and the Mythology of Australian Industrial Design in the Period 1930-1975” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2002, p 14-23, Simon Jackson, “Sacred Objects—Australian Design and National Celebrations” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2006, p 249-255, Per H. Hansen, “Networks, Narratives, and New Markets: The Rise and Decline of Danish Modern Furniture Design, 1930-1970” in *Business History Review*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2006, p 449-483 and Per H. Hansen, *Da danske møbler blev moderne—Historien om dansk møbeldesigns storhedstid* (Odense & København: Syddansk Universitetsforlag & Aschehoug, 2006). One should be wary, though, not to turn mythoclasm into more mythopoeia. As the Swedish and American historians of technology Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison caution, there is always a danger that such a catharsis may also result in new myths. Writing alternative histories do not necessarily solve the problem if they make use of the same emplotments and story lines as the traditional mythical narratives: Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison, *Hubris and Hybrids—A Cultural History of Technology and Science* (New York: Routledge, 2005) p 205-206 & 294-307

117. Dilnot, *op.cit.* p 9

118. Cheryl Buckley, “Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1986, p 3-14. Another and more problematic of Buckley’s core concerns is to include craft (both professional and hobby) in the subject matter of design history because craft traditionally has been a female arena whereas (industrial) design has been more of a male domain. Buckley seems to believe that these categories are merely terminological constructs which can be disposed of in order to facilitate a more gender-balanced history. But removing or disregarding actual historical divides—no matter how problematic, undesirable, shifting and complex they might be—can only lead to a distorted image of the past, i.e. highly questionable history. This is not to say that craft history has nothing to do with design history, though—there are many good reasons for the two to maintain and develop mutually beneficial relations. However, as the American design historian Carma R. Gorman has argued in her criticism of Buckley’s programme: “[R]edefining “design” to include “craft” is truly a dangerous move. Such a redefinition can do absolutely nothing to change the fact of past inequities... [I]t is foolish to dismiss the way that past practitioners and theorists categorized art, craft, and design, since those categories are an important part of the context and history of production and consumption of objects.”: Gorman, *op.cit.* p 79

119. Buckley, *op.cit.* p 14

objections to conventional design history are sound and her early request for a social constructivist history of design is compelling.

One of the most heated debates on historiography, theory and methodology was instigated by a 1992 *Design Studies* article by the American design historian Victor Margolin.¹²⁰ Acknowledging—though not reassured by—the field’s considerable development since the 1970s, Margolin stated that “there is little to show that could gain recognition for design history as a solid field of academic study” and that “design history has not developed on the basis of a well-understood subject matter or a set of methods and principles to guide research.”¹²¹ To Margolin, the rapidly changing subject matter (design) is a more relevant fulcrum than the approach/methods (history), and, referring to “the dynamic crossing of intellectual boundaries that are occurring elsewhere”,¹²² he thus proposes the primacy of a field of inquiry labelled *design studies* where the methodological apparatuses and insights of a wide range of established disciplines including e.g. philosophy, sociology, anthropology, ethnography—and history can be employed in the study of design.

Although not mentioned by the author, this proposal resembles the developments in science and technology studies (STS)—an interdisciplinary field of study which can be said to have consolidated around the time when Margolin wrote the article and which now is well established in academic terms. An important lesson, though, is that the establishment of STS, where philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and historians work side by side on studies of science and technology (in society) has not by any means rendered the discipline of history of technology any less relevant or potent. Hence there is no need to believe that the onset of design studies as a field of study needs to usurp design history nor preclude the latter’s further disciplinary development. Nevertheless, the virtues of disciplinary autonomy are well worth discussing. But if one were to accept Margolin’s claim that design history needs a broader analytic context, then I for one would opt for cultural history (widely defined, as the historic study of all cultural phenomena) rather than design studies, as the former in my opinion has a greater potential as a framework for developing the theory and methodology of a design *history*.

Not surprisingly, Margolin’s article provoked ardent response, particularly from British design historians who did not share Margolin’s grim outlook on the merits of design history as an academic discipline. In his reply in *Journal of Design History*, Adrian Forty refuted Margolin’s criticism on the grounds that the latter “has not given credit to the extent that design history has embraced new lines of thought”, referring especially to cultural studies and anthropology. In terms of defining the field, Forty did not see design history as a part of design studies, but as a part of history:

I do not feel the need, as Victor Margolin does, to discover a boundary for design history. To my mind, the main obligation of design history is to write good history—in its ends design history is no different to any other branch of history.... Margolin’s desire to define a

120. Victor Margolin, “Design history or design studies: subject matter and methods” in *Design Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1992, p 104-116

121. *Ibid.* p 105-106

122. *Ibid.* p 112

new field of study hardly seems necessary—surely the discipline of history as it has developed over the last century or so already provides a perfectly satisfactory definition of the ‘field’. All that is needed is for us to get better at answering the questions that it provokes.¹²³

Whereas Forty’s identification of design history as a part of history rather than design studies is appealing, the last part of the above quote may seem to portray the discipline of history somewhat deceptively harmonic, not mentioning any of the many feuds of modern historiography.

Victor Margolin’s response to Forty’s reply—published in a 1995 special issue of *Design Issues* together with reprints of Margolin’s catalyst essay and Forty’s reply as well as six other contributions—clarified Margolin’s view on the prime justification of historic studies of design: “I have proposed “design studies,” as a field that can more effectively bring historical research into relation with issues of current practice.”¹²⁴ He then goes on to substantiate his argument by claiming that

There are certainly ample precedents for the relation between historical research and contemporary practice in an academic field. Sociology is a good example. Some scholars concentrate on historical research and focus on issues of interpretation in the work of the preeminent historical figures—Durkheim, Weber, and Parsons, for example. This work is continually brought to bear on contemporary sociological theory as a means of questioning new ways of thought. Such a relation between past and present is immensely helpful and has prevented sociology from becoming too far removed from its own historical consciousness. Design history is the consciousness of design’s past. But without a relation to current practice, what is its purpose?¹²⁵

There are two aspects of this argument that makes it unclear at best, erroneous at worst—depending on conceptual interpretation: what is meant by “contemporary practice” and “historical research”, and how should they relate to each other? First concept first: In the case of sociology, it seems fairly clear that “contemporary practice” refers to the research done by sociologists (except historical sociology, perhaps?). In the case of design, it is less clear. Is “contemporary practice” the work carried out by practising designers? Or is it the work carried out by design researchers (e.g. research on design methods, process, management and strategy)—i.e. Margolin’s proposed field of “design studies”? Since the former interpretation could be seen as dangerously close to viewing design history as mere cultural backdrop or perhaps just some sort of source book for practising designers, I assume “contemporary practice” means contemporary design research (commercial and academic?)—although the two are not necessarily mutually excluding categories. This interpretation is supported by the analogy with sociology; “contemporary practice” in sociology seems to mean not social practice, but sociological research.¹²⁶

What is meant by “historical research”, then? In the case of sociology, Margolin is absolutely right in his observation that the discipline’s self-reflective historical studies

123. Adrian Forty, “DEBATE: A Reply to Victor Margolin” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993, p 131-132

124. Victor Margolin, “A Reply to Adrian Forty” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995, p 20

125. *Ibid.* p 20-21

(historiography of sociology) play an important part in the development of contemporary sociological research. If this is the only type of historical research allowed for in design studies, we are left with what might be termed a “history of design ideas”, whose principal purpose is to inform “contemporary (design research) practice”. This is probably a too harsh reading of Margolin’s intentions. Still, his analogy with sociology fails in that he does not mention that one of the principal trends in recent sociology is historical sociology.¹²⁷ This can broadly be described as research on all kinds of historical social phenomena—not just reexaminations of Durkheim, Weber and Parsons. When sociologists can find it purposeful to study topics such as Leninist and Stalinist era political posters,¹²⁸ and if Margolin considers this to be “historical research... brought to bear on contemporary sociological theory”, it is hard to envision what kind of design history would *not* establish the prescribed “relation to current practice”.

The curious point that it is precisely this issue—the relevance of design history to present design practice—that constitutes a common ground for Margolin and Forty is the crux of the American design historian Jeffrey L. Meikle’s contribution to the debate. He is surprised that Forty maintains that quality assessment is the very justification of design history and also what makes it relevant to present practice. Such an attitude, says Meikle, “all but abandons ‘design history’ for ‘design studies’” and thus devalues Forty’s defence of design history’s accomplishments:

Given Forty’s stated dedication to “the discipline of history as it has developed over the past two centuries, [sic]” we might expect to find his position fundamentally different from that of Margolin. In fact, they are quite similar. While defending design historians against the charge that they have accomplished little in twenty years, Forty actually ignores one of their real accomplishments—that is, their rescue of the field from a Pevsnerian concern for tracing an aesthetic evolution of ever more perfect artifacts (and ignoring everything else as, in fact, not really “design”).¹²⁹

Meikle’s incredulity of Forty’s insistence on quality assessment was enhanced by the fact that Forty a decade prior had written the widely acclaimed book *Objects of Desire*,¹³⁰ which Meikle described as “one of the first non-Pevsnerian works in the field.”¹³¹

126. Although sociology and the social sciences in general have a long tradition for a critical normative approach lending an instrumental aspect to research (sociological knowledge should inform social practice). It seems clear that Margolin envisions a similar function for design studies with respect to design practice. Conversely, in history and the humanities, this concept is much more controversial and often disapproved.

127. This development dates back at least to the 1970s. For an brief introduction, see e.g.: Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, “Introduction” in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999) p 1-32

128. I am alluding here to: Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997). Bonnell has been deeply engaged with the so-called “cultural turn” in the humanities—to which historical sociologists have contributed widely. Another example of just how “historical” sociologists have become—and one which makes a substantial contribution to design history at that—is: David Gartman, *Auto Opium—A Social History of American Automobile Design* (London: Routledge, 1994). This development has blurred the border between historical sociology and social history.

129. Jeffrey L. Meikle, “Design History for What?: Reflections on an Elusive Goal” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995, p 72

130. Adrian Forty, *Objects of Desire—Design and Society Since 1750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986)

Meikle's answer to the question of what design history is or should be and its relevance to present day concerns is that which I profess most historians—regardless of empirical affinity—would give: that history strives to reveal contingent realities of past society, but that nevertheless “it can indeed illuminate contemporary issues without directly addressing them”.¹³²

This reflective outlook on the fundamental characteristics of historical research was substantiated and elaborated by the American architectural historian Dennis Doordan, declaring that

History is the concerns of the present projected onto the past. As our present evolves so, too, do the questions we ask of the past. Out of the process of interrogating the past grows not a definitive account of past events, but an intelligible rendering of the complexity of human experience.¹³³

However basic and self-evident such reflections are, they nevertheless form an important statement about the historian's ethos and allegiance. This stance also underlies the critical attitude towards the relations between history and practice: “to subsume design history within the field of design studies, is to limit history to a narrowly conceived instrumental role in design practice.”¹³⁴ In short; notions of instrumentality and normativity are extremely deterring to those whose allegiance to history trumps that to design.

In another reply, Jonathan M. Woodham accused Margolin of “misrepresent[ing] the the academic health and identity of design history” and of “seek[ing] to colonize design history under the imperial umbrella of design studies”.¹³⁵ With the ambition to restore the honour of the discipline, so to speak, Woodham provided an updated historiographic account of recent research, drawing attention to the more innovative and refreshing contributions to design history. Echoing the objections raised by Forty, he concluded that

Contrary to [Margolin's] suggestions, design historians *have* taken on many of the challenges posed by other disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies, or feminist theory, and there is a growing body of evidence to support this.¹³⁶

Other debaters expressed more sympathy for Margolin's agenda. The British architecture and design theoretician Nigel Whiteley stated that

In the light of current approaches and preoccupations, it seems to me inevitable that what was once correctly termed “design history” should now be more properly called “design studies.”¹³⁷

131. Meikle, *op.cit.* p 73

132. *Ibid.* p 74

133. Dennis Doordan, “On History” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995, p 76

134. *Ibid.* p 81

135. Jonathan M. Woodham, “Resisting Colonization: Design History Has Its Own Identity” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995, p 22-23

136. *Ibid.* p 36

137. Nigel Whiteley, “Design History or Design Studies?” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995, p 39

To Whitely, though, it is precisely the interdisciplinary impulses on recent design history from fields such as semiology and cultural studies that has resulted in a situation where history may not always be the dominant organizing method and thus paving the way for a shift to “design studies”. However, what he reckons would be the benefits of such a renaming, apart from moving a few already easily transgressible disciplinary fences, remains rather elusive.

In his reflections on the initial feud between Margolin and Forty, the Canadian design theoretician and historian Alain Findeli commented that the two were in fact addressing two distinct but related problems. Their highly diverging views on the status and performance of design history depended on equally diverging views on what part of the term is to be given primacy—*design* or *history*: “Consequently, [Forty] is accused of taking design-as-a-field for granted, whereas [Margolin] could be accused of taking history-as-a-discipline for granted.”¹³⁸ In other words, it can be seen as a debate between *design* historians and design *historians* about pledging allegiances. Findeli’s primary concern, though,—spurred by Forty’s above mentioned brief and somewhat naive notions of “the discipline of history as it has developed over the last century or so... provid[ing] a perfectly satisfactory definition of the ‘field’”¹³⁹—is to elaborate on some questions regarding the philosophy of history.

Taking his queue from Michel Foucault’s influential but highly disputed *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,¹⁴⁰ Findeli starts out with a short outline of general epistemological and methodological developments in 20th century historiography from the flight from Hegelianism via the *Annales* school and analytic rigour of structuralist history to the archeological and genealogical methods proposed by Foucault and onwards to the relativism and pluralism of post-structuralist approaches. At issue are the possible modes of historical knowledge, and then where design history could fit in this discussion. Although from a historian’s viewpoint this little excursion into general historiography may seem rather cursory, it does expand on and supply a necessary background to Forty’s claim that “the main obligation of design history is to write good history”¹⁴¹ by inviting reflections on what constitutes “good history”. Findeli joins Forty and Woodham in objecting to Margolin’s conviction that the traditional art history template still dominated design history, but, based on his discussion of general historiography, his reply takes on a different character as he speculates:

Should [Margolin] be willing to extend his view of historical methodology, I wonder whether he would hold on to his diagnosis. But such a rehabilitating of design history through the refinement of research methodologies dissolves the issue of the status of design studies.¹⁴²

138. Alain Findeli, “Design History and Design Studies: Methodological, Epistemological and Pedagogical Inquiry” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995, p 46

139. Adrian Forty, “DEBATE: A Reply to Victor Margolin” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993, p 132

140. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972)

141. Forty, *op.cit.*

142. Findeli, *op.cit.* p 53

Findeli proposes what he calls “the polar organic model” as a more nuanced approach to design history based on a fuller understanding of the philosophy of history. This approach should strive to embrace all (or at least as many as possible of) the “many... distinct and equally relevant ways of telling this story” by applying a multitude of organizing structures (in addition to those already commonly practised, he suggested e.g. design history as the history of technology and of materials, as the history of education and of ideas, as the anthropological and economic histories of the material world, as the history of the symbolic function of artifacts and as the history of specific daily practices in connection with design).¹⁴³ The purpose of this model is to foster an understanding of design history that reveals its many different trajectories, complexities, pluralisms, multidimensionalities, contradictions, discrepancies, juxtapositions and serialities. This ambition is highly laudable as well as plausible. Design history as it is practised today—at least in research, perhaps less so in teaching—does approach a vast range of subjects along a great number of organizing structures, although, as Findeli demonstrates, there is a great potential in exploring the less travelled of these (and other) paths.

Another contribution to the methodological development of design history which takes Foucault as a point of departure has come from the British design historian Stephen Hayward. His ambition is to put Foucauldian discourse theory to use in design history. Finding Foucault’s ideas somewhat too rigid and dismissive of any notion of freedom or creativity in acts of consumption, Hayward calls upon more recent theories of consumption as well as Bourdieu’s notion of taste as social distinction in his attempt to modify them to better suit design history.¹⁴⁴

Although Hayward’s adjustment of Foucauldian discourse theory no doubt is essential to its potential application to design history, the most problematic aspect remains unchallenged: how to address and acknowledge the materiality of discursive objects in a satisfactory manner. Because even though Foucault stresses that his discursive artefacts may be buildings and objects just as well as texts, they are rarely recognized beyond their representational and formative functions.¹⁴⁵ The alluring promise of equality of prominence bestowed on objects thus rapidly fades into a bleak flattening-out of their material particularities. Discourse theory may be an appropriate tool if one approaches design history as a history of (textual) design discourse, but is ill equipped to encounter a core concern of most design history: the materiality of objects.

As interesting and important textual design discourses might be, it is hard to disagree when Jeffrey L. Meikle states that “I can’t help thinking that the cardinal virtue of design history is its involvement with the material, its concern for the physical stuff.”¹⁴⁶ This remark was meant as a warning not to lose focus on the objects and processes of design in the recent vogue in design history of studying mediation and consumption. Not that

143. *Ibid.* p 62-63

144. Stephen Hayward, “‘Good design is largely a matter of common sense’: Questioning the Meaning and Ownership of a Twentieth-Century Orthodoxy” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998, p 217-233

145. In a sense, then, discourse theory can be subjected to the same criticism as semiotics: that it fails to recognize that the object has qualities and functions beyond that as “text”, “sign” or “symbol”.

146. Jeffrey L. Meikle, “Material Virtues: on the Ideal and the Real in Design History” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998, p 198

these new efforts were not laudable—on the contrary: Meikle sees the search for improved understanding of the use and consumption of design as highly desirable. The problem is simply that “we have no way of knowing with certainty how and why consumers at a given historical moment responded to particular products”, because—as opposed to when studying the production side of design—documentation is normally nonexistent.¹⁴⁷ The danger is, then, that “we tend too quickly to accept the opinions of designers and promoters about the meanings of their creations to the people who use, inhabit or consume them.”¹⁴⁸ Much of the inspiration for the turn towards consumption studies in design history has come from disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies and sociology. Invigorating as this may be, Meikle argues that “social scientists who investigate the consumer side of contemporary design avoid this historian’s conundrum.”¹⁴⁹ The American cultural and design historian Paul Betts has made a similar point, observing that

The difficulty of ascertaining why consumers consume certain products and not others, to say nothing of how they understand and use them, is not just the problem of marketing departments. It effectively represents a sobering epistemological limit for all historians of material culture.¹⁵⁰

Meikle’s and Bett’s point is as compelling as it is simple; the admirable task of studying past use and consumption is a daunting one, fraught with epistemological and methodological problems.¹⁵¹

3.5 Material culture studies of industrial design history

As has been remarked in passing above, one of the most prominent influences on recent design history has been material culture studies. If design history’s disciplinary status is

147. *Ibid.* p 194. And, he continues: “How can we know how and why people responded to the products... that surrounded them? How do we know what the results of design mean to the people who negotiate them, often unselfconsciously, in their daily lives? These questions are all the more important now that most of us have abandoned a straightforward Frankfurt School-inspired assumption of passive consumers completely at the mercy of manipulative capitalists.” (p 195)

148. *Ibid.*

149. *Ibid.* p 196

150. Betts, *op.cit.* p 19

151. The British geographic historian Paul Glennie has suggested that documentation of historical consumers’ negotiation of the meaning of commodities can be sought in diaries, correspondence, wills, inventories, personal and household accounts, etc. This may be possible in exceptional cases where the relevant documentation was in fact made and has survived, but in general such evidence would at best be piecemeal and incoherent. These methodological problems concerning the study of—as Meikle put it—“how and why consumers at a given historical moment responded to particular products” is probably why most historical studies of consumption have concentrated on patterns of possessions and practices of purchasing, often drawing on structuralist and quantitative traditions from economic and social history: Paul Glennie, “Consumption Within Historical Studies” in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Acknowledging Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1995) p 164-203. For an interesting example of a history of consumption that pairs the studies of consumption practices and gender identities, see: Victoria de Grazia (ed.), *The Sex of Things—Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)

somewhat unclear and disputable, even more so in the case of material culture studies. In fact, as one of the principle promoters of material cultural studies, British anthropologist Daniel Miller, has stated;

the subject does not exist as a given discipline,.. and there are many advantages to remaining undisciplined and many disadvantages and constraints imposed by trying to claim disciplinary status.¹⁵²

There is thus no point here in trying to define or demarcate this “undisciplined discipline”. It should suffice to consider it a loosely consolidated field of study focusing on the material aspects of culture. The field has generated a substantial following and produced a large amount of highly diverse research, and any comprehensive review or discussion is neither possible nor desirable in the present context. My sole ambition here is to point to a few works that have influenced design history or may do so. In various ways they can represent what I consider to be the three major strands (or disciplinary origins) of material culture studies; anthropology and ethnography, museology, and archaeology and history of science and technology.

There can be no doubt that it is the first of these three, and especially as practised by a group of British anthropologists, which has had the most explicit and widespread influence on design history. For the sake of convenience and brevity, it should be no unforgivable simplification to exemplify this strand with the work of the already introduced Daniel Miller. The rather uneasy relationship between Miller and design history can be said to begin in 1987 with the publication of his book *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* in which he dismissed design history as “a form of pseudo art history, in which the task is to locate great individuals... and portray them as the creators of modern mass culture.”¹⁵³ This accusation did of course not go unnoticed by design historians, and Miller was invited as keynote speaker at the Design History Society conference in London and Brighton the very same year.¹⁵⁴ The anthropologist’s initial provocation proved inspirational rather than insulting to design historians and his studies of consumption as a creative aspect of culture was met with great interest.

In a review of the book for the *Journal of Design History*, Charles Saumarez Smith described it as “the best available guide to recent writing and thinking on consumption”, but at the same time revealing “a tendency to intellectual voyeurism, of the anthropologist looking in at the window of other people’s activities while never quite participating.” His most fundamental objection to Miller’s approach, however, was that “[o]bjects are seen as actively constituting social relations without a sense of their three-dimensionality, their texture, their sheer cussedness as the reification of social order.”¹⁵⁵ The apparent paradox in the assertion that material culture studies was unable to satisfactorily address the materiality of objects only makes the criticism more poignant.¹⁵⁶ Smith concluded in a reconciliatory manner that

152. Daniel Miller, “Why some things matter” in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Material cultures—Why some things matter* (London: UCL Press, 1998) p 4

153. Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) p 142

154. Woodham, *op.cit.* p 33

For the design historian the lesson would seem to be that the anthropologist's ability to listen to what people have to say about artefacts is more useful than the social theorist's attempts to abstract them into political or philosophical systems.¹⁵⁷

Perhaps not surprisingly, Miller did not share this outlook regarding material culture studies and the attention to the materiality of objects—quite the contrary:

What we may regard as unique to our approach is that we remain focused upon the object that is being investigated but within a tradition that prevents any simple fetishization of material form. Indeed we feel that it is precisely those studies that quickly move the focus from object to society in their fear of fetishism and their apparent embarrassment at being, as it were, caught gazing at mere objects, that retain the negative consequences of the term “fetishism”. It is for them that Coke is merely a material symbol, banners stand in a simple moment of representation or radio becomes mere text to be analyzed.¹⁵⁸

One of the aspects of material culture studies, and perhaps especially in Miller's version, that has made it so alluring to design historians is the consistent concern with the use and consumption of things.¹⁵⁹ As traditional design history has been accused of being obsessed with the production—or rather: the conceptual creation—of things and thus

155. Charles Saumarez Smith, “Material Culture and Mass Consumption” [book review] in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1988, p 149-150. However, this criticism has at times been ambivalent: In a review of Miller's edited volume *Material cultures—Why some things matter*, Andrea Pellegram's contribution—a study of paper use in a contemporary office—was praised precisely for “her close attention to the physical properties of paper”. Nevertheless, the review was still concerned that “while these authors analyse objects closely, they do so with the intention of seeing how details illuminate cultural behaviour and beliefs.”: Kenneth L. Ames, “Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter” [book review] in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000, p 74-75

156. The Norwegian archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen has wielded a similar but more detailed criticism of material culture studies's inattention to materiality. In explaining how this inadequacy came about, he draws on e.g. Bruno Latour's notion of the strict ontological divide inherent to the idea of Modernity; nature-culture (and human-nonhuman), which has “assigned to things an ambiguous position within the modern constitution. They are located outside the human sphere of power, interests and politics — and still not properly nature. Although prescribed for the non-human side, material culture ended up with not occupying any of the two positions prescribed by the modern constitution, as either culture or nature.” The inattention to materiality thus results from an intellectual heritage giving absolute primacy to the social. Insisting that artefacts are more than texts, signs, symbols, messages, metaphors and icons, Olsen proposes Actor Network Theory (ANT), as conceptualised by Latour, John Law, *et al.* as a theoretical framework better suited to grasp the materiality of artefact—as “a regime that cares for the hybrids and those hybrid relations that other systems (be they social or natural) largely have ignored. Thus, it suits material culture, the thing, very well.”: Bjørnar Olsen, “Material Culture after Text: Re-Membering Things” in *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2003, p 87-104 (quotes: p 96 & 98). For Latour's discussion of Modernity's nature-culture divide, see: Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). For an introduction to ANT, see e.g.: John Law and John Hassard (eds.), *Actor Network Theory and after* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) and Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social—An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

157. Smith, *op.cit.* p 150

158. Daniel Miller, “Why some things matter” in Daniel Miller (ed.), *op.cit.* p 9. In an earlier, brief historiographic outline for material culture studies Miller went a long way in acknowledging that the physical materiality of objects had been “lost” to social anthropologists, and explained this partly with the growing cleavage between social anthropology and archaeology and partly with the vogue of linguistic analysis: “Despite the claim of semiotics to an interest in non-linguistic modes of communication, the emphasis in structuralism and post-structuralism in on ‘word’, ‘text’ and ‘discourse’.”: Daniel Miller, “Things ain't what they used to be” in Pearce (ed.), *op.cit.* p 13-18 (quote: p 15)

ignoring their use and consumption, it is highly understandable that this trait of material culture studies has proved fascinating. However, the anthropological strand of material culture studies has often focused so strongly on the consumption side that the production side has been left more or less unexplored. One could argue, then, that substituting one bias for another is not all that rewarding, although increased balance in available approaches is a definite improvement. Still, material culture studies has not provided any ready template for research into the relations between the spheres of production and consumption.¹⁶⁰ Such an approach would in my opinion be highly advantageous in design history, where negotiations and mediations between producers/designers and users/consumers provide excellent access to understanding design as material culture.

The impact of material culture studies in general and Daniel Miller's work in particular on design history can be said to be personified in Alison J. Clarke. Having graduated in design history, she went on to earn a PhD in anthropology under the supervision of Miller. She has since moved closer to "home" in terms of institutional surroundings and research communities more "typical" of design history.¹⁶¹ Her work has been published e.g. in anthologies edited by Miller,¹⁶² but the cross-fertilization of material culture studies and design history is probably most evident in her 1999 book *Tupperware—The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America*.¹⁶³ In terms of a material culture studies approach to design history, the major virtue of this book is that Clarke here manages to combine the former's concern for consumption with the latter's insistence on

159. This alignment of "use" and "consumption" is a somewhat unfortunate simplification, because, as Victor Margolin has argued—referring specifically to Daniel Miller; "Sociologists and anthropologists have concerned themselves with issues of consumption rather than with issues of use.": Victor Margolin, "The Experience of Products" in Victor Margolin, *The Politics of the Artificial* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) p 52. Likewise, Judy Attfield has claimed that "the post-commodity phase is usually ignored as irrelevant to the process of consumption": Judy Attfield, *Wild Things—The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000) p 144. Some studies do operate with a broader understanding of consumption, charting the "biographies" of artefacts way beyond their commodity stage. There is, however, even in these studies normally a heavy bias towards the symbolic use of objects, so that their functional use is still given only limited attention. See e.g.: Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things—Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) and Michael Thompson, *Rubbish Theory—The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)

160. Although occasional excursions into this territory have been made, as in Miller's own case study of Coca-Cola in Trinidad: Daniel Miller, "Coca-Cola: a black sweet drink from Trinidad" in Daniel Miller (ed.), *op.cit.* p 169-187, esp. p 181-184. Here Miller concedes that "consumption studies have suffered by failing to appreciate the importance of the link to production" (p 183), but he does not seem to consider this any major problem. It may seem as though sociologists moving into (material) culture studies have professed a more symmetrical approach—a case in point being the highly didactic and instructive case study of the Sony *Walkman* where both the production and the consumption of the artefact—as well as the other three "sectors" of what the authors refer to as the "cycle of culture": representation, identity and regulation—is given fairly equal consideration. It is of particular interest here that the authors seek to "emphasize the way in which production and consumption are interrelated and overlap" and stress "how design is centrally located at this [intermediary] point": du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus, *op.cit.* p 52-53

161. She has held positions in design history at the University of Brighton, University of Southampton, the Royal College of Art, London, and the University of Applied Arts, Vienna.

162. Alison J. Clarke, "Window shopping at home: classifieds, catalogues and new consumer skills" in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Material cultures—Why some things matter* (London: UCL Press, 1998) p 73-99 and Alison J. Clarke, "The Aesthetics of Social Aspiration" in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Home Possessions—Material Culture Behind Closed Doors* (Oxford: Berg, 2001) p 23-45

163. Alison J. Clarke, *Tupperware—The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999)

the materiality of the designed object in all its complex relations. The result is a highly inclusive design history encompassing both invention, design, technology, manufacture, marketing, retailing, reception, consumption and use of the artefacts in question.

Clarke argues that processes of social and cultural mediation are formative even of seemingly trivial artefacts. Another appealing (but somewhat underdeveloped) approach is how both consumers, dealers, distributors, sales managers and product testers are seen as contributors to the formal product design process.¹⁶⁴ In her conclusion, Clarke makes the very sound claim that

The “success” of a specific design cannot be traced to one monolithic process but is the result of a multitude of frequently conflicting forces and agents that make up the dynamic between production and consumption.¹⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the production-side of material culture—questions pertaining to design strategies, production technology and manufacturing process—is highly underrepresented and rather compendiously treated. The book is thus a testament to material culture studies’ preference of consumption to production.

Another British design historian who has taken a particular interest in material culture studies is the Judy Attfield. In a review essay on the relationship between material culture studies and design history she sought

to point out the relation between the decline in confidence in deterministic production models for the interpretation of the history of design with the increase in interest in consumption and material culture as a less rigid framework for the investigation of the relationship between designed objects and those persons and institutions who conceive produce, sell, buy and use them.¹⁶⁶

Attfield considered one of the prime virtues of the material culture studies approach to design history to be “that it does not exclude any artefact or part of the mundane everyday object-world and meant venturing into territories that were once considered beyond the pale.”¹⁶⁷ While lauding material culture studies’ efficiency as an antidote to “the heroic approach” and as a catalyst for consumption studies in design history, she also identified some more problematic aspects of the field’s recent proliferation. One of these was the insistence on eluding debates on the field’s scope and concerns, making it difficult to survey, assess and employ in a satisfactorily grounded manner. More interesting, however, is that Attfield, echoing the above mentioned criticism by Charles Saumarez Smith, expressed a concern that some strands of material culture studies seems inept at coping with the materiality of objects.¹⁶⁸

It follows that the ambition to address the physical materiality of artefacts underpins Attfield’s 2000 book *Wild Things—The Material Culture of Everyday Life*. Informed by

164. *Ibid.* esp. p 116-117

165. *Ibid.* p 201

166. Judy Attfield, “Beyond the Pale: Reviewing the Relationship between Material Culture and Design History” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1999, p 373

167. *Ibid.*

her interest in material culture studies it investigates questions of design and identity, the meanings of human-object relations and the social life of things.¹⁶⁹ An introductory statement reads

So what I have called here ‘the material culture of everyday life’, acknowledges the physical object in all its materiality and encompasses the work of design, making, distributing, consuming, using, discarding, recycling and so on.¹⁷⁰

Except for an interesting case study of a reproduction period furniture manufacturer (based on excerpts from the author’s doctoral dissertation), however, Attfield’s *Wild Things* rarely considers the pre-commodified stages of artefacts, thus leaving it open to the above outlined critique of material culture studies: its insufficient interest in the relations between the spheres of production and consumption.¹⁷¹ Also, to a historian, the book’s treatment of empirical material seems rather fragmentary.

It should be clear now that the anthropological strand of material culture studies has been met by design historians with a great deal of interest and enthusiasm, but also with a fair amount of sound criticism. Like most of his colleagues, Victor Margolin has also acknowledged the value of Daniel Miller’s research on consumption for design studies, especially his thesis that

consumption is not a passive act, but a creative project through which people put products to use in ways that were not necessarily intended by those who designed and produced them. Miller has thus broadened the context within which to study products in *contemporary* culture.¹⁷² [my italics]

What is most interesting about Margolin’s comment is not so much the acknowledgement of Miller’s work, but rather the implicit criticism that it has less value for historical studies. This brings us to the perhaps most weighty criticism of material culture studies seen from an historian’s perspective; the uneasy leap from the normally contemporary scene or concern of social science to that of history. For example, the American design historian Kenneth L. Ames questioned the immediate usefulness of material culture studies to design historians, arguing that its habitual method, ethnography, “works best

168. *Ibid.* p 373-380. Attfield repeated this critique in her review of the British sociologist Tim Dant’s 1999 book *Material Culture in the Social World*: “That the main thrust of the book is fuelled by attempts to define material culture by means of theories of representation only serves to emphasize the representational qualities of physical entities so that we are returned to the world of words, texts and images rather than to their actual physical presence—their materiality.”: Judy Attfield, “Material Culture in the Social World” [book review] in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2002, p 65-66

169. Judy Attfield, *Wild Things—The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000)

170. *Ibid.* p 3

171. This is interesting considering that Attfield later has stated that a key disparity between design history and material culture studies is that in design history, “work and production are considered as important as the consumption and appropriation of things in analysing material culture”: Judy Attfield, “Material Culture in the Social World” [book review] in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2002, p 66. An example of her work that succeeds better in investigating the relations between the spheres of production and consumption is her edited volume on the concept of utility in design: Judy Attfield (ed.), *Utility Reassessed—The Role of Ethics in the Practice of Design* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)

172. Victor Margolin, “Design history or design studies: subject matter and methods” in *Design Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1992, p 115

when used in the present, that is when scholars can talk to and observe living people.¹⁷³ Reviewing Miller's 1998 edited volume *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, Ames observed that

The studies in this book rely on historical background to varying degrees but all emphasize the present or very recent past. Historical studies necessarily draw on different forms of data.¹⁷⁴

It is hardly surprising that historians worry about how other fields and disciplines appropriate history. Their attitude towards historical sociology, for instance, has at times been rather apprehensive. What happens to historical knowledge when it is utilized by and represented in other scholarly contexts? Concerned about history's position in the recent reorganisation of disciplinary structures in academia, the British historian Carolyn Steedman asked how historical is cultural studies? As she observed, there is no doubt that cultural studies does contain many historical components, but their quality may very well be questionable. She warned against treating history haphazardly as bits and pieces of readily applicable knowledge, and worried about the status of history's traditional quality assurance standard: the scrutinising practices of archive research and differentiating source analysis. Furthermore; historians normally acknowledge the impermanence of their research results. Whereas this acknowledgement makes this temporariness not particularly problematic to historians themselves, "[i]t may matter... when text-based historical knowledge is removed from the narrative and cognitive frame of historical practice, and used in another field."¹⁷⁵ She went on to explain the possible perils:

It has been observed before what can happen to the written history in these circumstances: it loses its impermanence... The historical item (the bit of written history) taken out of its narrative setting in order to explain something else (an event, a development, a structure) is stabilized, made a building block for a different structure of explanation. This has been observed, for the main part, in the use of the written history within sociological explanation. It is probably the case that within British cultural studies... history meets the same fate as it has within sociology.¹⁷⁶

There is the danger, then—according to Steedman—that history suffers abuse and misunderstanding in the hands of other disciplines,¹⁷⁷ and that the historical components of cultural studies become mere “props” or “supporting acts” used for legitimatizing

173. Ames, *op.cit.* p 75

174. *Ibid.*

175. Carolyn Steedman, “Culture, Cultural Studies and the Historians” in Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) p 48

176. *Ibid.*

177. It is tempting, here to suggest an example from one of the seminal works in material culture studies of what to an historian seems like a rather distorted understanding of history: The British anthropologist Mary Douglas and economist Baron Isherwood operated with a time concept they called “ethnographic present” that is based on the premise that “Whatever is important about the past is assumed to be making itself felt here and now.”: Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods—Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (London: Allen Lane, 1979) p 23

purposes: “Will there be any room for detailed historical work; or are students of cultural studies bound to rely on great schematic and secondary sweeps through time?”¹⁷⁸

As indicated by the above mentioning of museology as the second strand of material culture studies, the concept also refers to the main subject of this discipline—also known as museum studies. One of the protagonists of this field is the British historian and archaeologist Susan M. Pearce. What characterises this strand of material culture studies is a particular focus on the study of artefacts within the context of museums, critically analysing policies and practices of collecting, curating and exhibiting.¹⁷⁹

A particularly appealing side to the museum studies approach to the interpretation of objects is its appreciation of and insistence on the multitude of types of meanings that objects may possess or convey. Both the historical, utilitarian, emotional, symbolic and political aspects of objects’ meanings are considered legitimate approaches to the study of material culture.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, the various meanings of things are seen as developing as an interactive process between object and subject.¹⁸¹ This dynamic understanding of the creation of meaning as a sort of co-production allows for a more active object, but at the same time steers clear of material determinism.

Museum studies is closely linked to museum practice (acquisitive, curatorial and exhibitiv) with its hands-on approach to objects. Its greatest potential methodological contribution to design history, then, might perhaps lie in micro-level object analysis, providing an alternative to traditional art historical methods and semiotics. The tendency in discussions on theory and methodology not to discriminate between widely different types of objects, be they bronze-age tools, renaissance paintings or eighteenth-century tombstones,¹⁸² may to a design historian be both liberating as well as frustrating. It is important to keep in mind, though, that the objects under scrutiny in industrial design history are (normally) not conventional museum pieces—just as they are not works of art or (just) signs.¹⁸³ Also, museum studies seems prone to the same bias towards the post-objectified phases of artefacts’ lives as does consumption studies, and may thus be of limited value to design historians trying to understand the complexities of design processes and production systems as integral to material culture.¹⁸⁴

The third and last of the three strands of material culture studies to be considered here is most decidedly both historical and sensitive to the materiality of artefacts. While being even more resistant to definition and delimitation than consumption studies and museology, it might be loosely described as being comprised e.g. of archaeologists, art

178. Steedman, *op.cit.* p 55

179. See e.g.: Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Museum Studies in Material Culture* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1989)

180. Susan M. Pearce, “Introduction” in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994) p 4-5

181. Susan M. Pearce, “Objects as meaning; or narrating the past” in Pearce (ed.), *op.cit.* p 26-27

182. Although industrial goods seem to be virtually absent: Only one essay in *Interpreting Objects and Collections* considers a modern, mass-produced object—a 1910 AEG electric kettle designed by Peter Behrens. Despite the fact that these products—largely due to the mythopoeia hailing Behrens as ‘the world’s first industrial designer’—are now quite common as museum pieces, it is symptomatic of the general bias against mundane artefacts in the museum sector that the author, Science Museum (London) curator Ray Batchelor, had to ask the reader: “I would like you to join me in *imagining* my kettle is a museum object, and less plausibly perhaps, that we are its curators.” [my italics]: Ray Batchelor, “Not looking at kettles” in Pearce (ed.), *op.cit.* p 140

historians and historians of science and technology with a particular interest in the object as historical source and the relation between matter and meaning. As evidenced by the titles of three central works in this area, the core concerns are: How can we write *History from Things*?¹⁸⁵ What could we be *Learning from Things*?¹⁸⁶ How can we understand *Things That Talk*?¹⁸⁷ The object as source is the governing idea of this otherwise disparate and interdisciplinary field. As the American historians of technology Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery write in their introduction to *History from Things*:

Historians traditionally use documents rather than artifacts in their effort to understand the past. But the artifact-document dichotomy is to a great extent artificial; documents are a species of artifact[.]. By neglecting all but a narrow class of artifacts, those with writing on them, historians have missed opportunities... Not only do artifacts present new evidence to support historical arguments; they also suggest new arguments and provide a level of rhetorical support to arguments that mere documents cannot begin to approach. Artifacts, especially when used in conjunction with the sorts of history gleaned from documentary sources, widen our view of history as they increase the evidence for historical interpretations.¹⁸⁸

This take on material culture studies does not only aim to unify artifacts and documents as sources, but aims at a wide coalition of both subjects and approaches:

It is hoped that material culture studies can bring together performance and production, consumers and creators, men and women, diachronic and synchronic, tools and signs, practicality and aesthetics, societies and cultures in a way that enlightens a wide, multidisciplinary audience.¹⁸⁹

183. Nevertheless, museology may occasionally have the potential to transgress these categories in invigorating ways. A case in point, where a simple distortion or (partial) inversion of a classical value such as authenticity proved both fertile and original, was the 1990 British Museum exhibition *Fakes?* The project presented forged artefacts not as atrocity propaganda but out of genuine interest in their functions and meanings for makers and customers: “Fakes are, however, only secondarily a source of evidence for the outlook of those who made and uncovered them. They are, before all else, a response to demand, an ever-changing portrait of human desires... It may be significant then that the great growth area for faking today is not the creation of religious relics, national epics, or works of art... but the massive counterfeiting of brand-named goods.”: Mark Jones, “Why fakes?” in Pearce (ed.), *op.cit.* p 94. The beauty of such an approach is that it cuts across object categories—from documents and paintings to wristwatches and handbags—focusing of an alternative dimension which may give us a new perspective on the values, functions and meanings of material culture in general.

184. Pearce’s outline for artefact analysis methodology (like most other) does consider properties like material, construction, design, and manufacturing techniques in addition to environment, significance and interpretation, but the model appear fairly static and linear/sequential. It may be a good starting point in encounters with unfamiliar objects, but translating it from archeology to design history would require substantial modifications and expansions: Susan M. Pearce, “Thinking about things” in Pearce (ed.), *op.cit.* p 125-132. As such, the model proposed by Ray Batchelor based on a case study of a 1910 AEG electric kettle seems much more appropriate. This invokes the relevance of studying not only the innovative technology and design the product represents, but also the conditions of the miners in the nickel mines, the roles of the sheet-metal dealer and the AEG workers, the distribution systems, the marketing strategies and the patterns and experiences of use: Batchelor, *op.cit.* p 139-143

185. Lubar and Kingery (eds.), *op.cit.*

186. Kingery (ed.), *op.cit.*

187. Daston (ed.), *op.cit.*

188. Lubar and Kingery, *op.cit.* p ix

189. W. David Kingery, “Introduction” in Kingery (ed.), *op.cit.* p 15

By insisting on assessing the overall life cycle of artifacts and thus de-emphasising the conventional production-consumption divide, Lubar and Kingery *et al.* achieve a better distributed set of approaches than those promoted by e.g. Daniel Miller discussed above. This is most urgently expressed in the contribution by the Dutch historian of technology Ruth Oldenziel:

The static economic dichotomy between production and consumption that underlay many concepts in the history of technology represents the most stubborn taxonomy of all... Production and consumption are not separate affairs, but constitute each other.¹⁹⁰

Sustaining the need to historicize this dynamic relation, Oldenziel (*et al.*) has elsewhere argued that “It is at this juncture of mediation [between production and consumption] that social actors and institutions negotiated the mediated design and the appropriation of new products and technologies.”¹⁹¹ It should be clear, then, that not only are production and consumption not separate affairs, but—as Kingery points out: “Design, manufacture, distribution, and use are all activities involving cultural constraints and social organization.”¹⁹² Another simplistic but resilient dichotomy that is challenged repeatedly in these essays is the notion of artifact as tool—artifact as symbol. Criticising both the old functionalist views as well as the linguistically derived semiotics, it is here asserted that any artefact is always both tool and symbol—and that the relation between the two is complex and dynamic, and subject to changes in time, situations and culture.

Both the *History from Things* and the *Learning from Things* volumes resulted from conferences held at the Smithsonian Institution, and has been recognized for their interdisciplinary take on material culture. To design historians, though, their empirical subject matter may be considered too disparate. As Victor Margolin laconically stated: “These two conferences were important to the field for their focus on methodological issues... In neither conference volume, however, was there any mention of design.”¹⁹³ Of course, these publications do include topics of less than immediate interest to industrial design historians, such as e.g. Chinese bronze vessels from around 1000 B.C., 18th century English gardens and anthropological metallurgy. But they also include highly relevant and interesting essays with more than a fair “mention of design”.¹⁹⁴

In addition to those already mentioned, especially the historians of technology made some important contributions—particularly on methodological questions—that, in my

190. Ruth Oldenziel, “Object/ions—Technology, Culture, and Gender” in Kingery (ed.), *op.cit.* p 60-62

191. Ruth Oldenziel, Adri Albert de la Bruhèze and Onno de Wit, “Europe’s Mediation Junction: Technology and Consumer Society in the 20th Century” in *History and Technology*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2005, p 107

192. W. David Kingery, “Technological Systems and Some Implications with Regard to Continuity and Change” in Lubar and Kingery (eds.), *op.cit.* p 227

193. Victor Margolin, “Design History in the United States, 1977-2000” in Victor Margolin, *The Politics of the Artificial* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) p 154. Margolin has a point insofar as the Smithsonian volumes are not (and do not pass themselves off as) design history. Still, Margolin’s remark appear rather abrupt and scant. But seen in the context of the essay in which it appears, it seems his intent is not so much to say that the books in question disregard design *per se*—rather that he would have welcomed a greater concern for mass produced goods and the industrial design process.

194. The editors of *History From Things* state that “nine [of seventeen] essays address the design of the artifact, seven essays address the use of the artefact, and eight essays address the perceptions of the artifact. In five essays the artifact manufacture is of concern”: Lubar and Kingery, *op.cit.* p xvi

opinion, are of great value to design historians: Robert Friedel “suggest[ed] that our understanding of history from things also should begin with the materials that go into our artifacts”, seeing as “[t]he material itself conveys messages, metaphorical and otherwise, about the objects and their place in a culture.”¹⁹⁵ More abstract, but equally convincing is Steven Lubar’s bid for a political history of (machine) design.¹⁹⁶ Acknowledging the indirect learning from things in which historians of technology (and design) engage in—the historians’ “tacit knowledge”, as it were—Joseph J. Corn lamented that “[e]ven in an object-centered speciality like the history of technology, being “objective” paradoxically may require suppressing experience with actual objects.”¹⁹⁷ Very different but equally thought-provoking is Michael Brian Schiffer’s account of the methodological problems of source research in the study of industrial products and manufacturers belonging to the fringes of the industrial community.¹⁹⁸ Despite their very divergent foci and approaches, these works are of considerable value to anyone interested in artifacts as sources of knowledge and material culture in general—design historians included.

The more recent volume, *Things That Talk*, edited by the American historian of science Lorraine Daston is just as varied in subject matter and just as intriguing in its examination of the significance of artifacts. As could only be expected, the contributors have quite diverging views on just how literally the book title is to be understood. At the one end of the spectre, the American art historian Joseph Leo Koerner acknowledges that objects are “effective generators of discourse”, but refuses any further concessions: “[W]hile I don’t believe that the things I write about physically speak to me, there is something satisfying about pretending they do.”¹⁹⁹ The American historian of science Peter Galison, on the other hand, seems to go a long way in granting artefacts—in this case the inkblot cards used by psychologists in the Rorschach test—not only a voice of their own, but a highly authoritative one at that: “Not only did these cards talk; they did so in the virtue of their form and color down to the smallest detail.”²⁰⁰ Most of the authors, however, take a stand somewhere in between, seeing artefacts as both inarticulate and loquacious, both compliant and defiant. Making things talk—both to historians and to historical actors—thus become a matter of coaxing, translation, negotiation and networking. One example is the British historian of science Simon Schaffer’s demonstration of how different interest groups and the spheres of art, advertisement, industry and science in 19th century Britain strove to make a highly ephemeral and unstable object—soap bubbles—talk correctly and favourably.²⁰¹ Despite their at times disturbingly disparate subject matters, these three volumes on

195. Robert Friedel, “Some Matters of Substance” in Lubar and Kingery (eds.), *op.cit.* p 42

196. Steven Lubar, “Machine Politics: The Political Construction of Technological Artifacts” in Lubar and Kingery (eds.), *op.cit.* p 197-214

197. Corn, *op.cit.* p 47

198. Michael Brian Schiffer, “Pathways to the Present—In Search of Shirt-Pocket Radios with Subminiature Tubes” in Kingery (ed.), *op.cit.* p 81-88

199. Joseph Leo Koerner, “Bosch’s Equipment” in Daston (ed.), *op.cit.* p 45

200. Peter Galison, “Image of Self” in Daston (ed.), *op.cit.* p 271

201. Simon Schaffer, “A Science Whose Business Is Bursting: Soap Bubbles as Commodities in Classical Physics” in Daston (ed.), *op.cit.* p 147-192

thinking about things represent a strand of material culture studies that has a lot to offer design historians in terms of how to approach material artifacts.

As expected, I have not reached any coherent conclusion regarding the merits of material culture studies or its value to design history. When faced with a field of study and subject matter so disparate and comprehensive in terms of theoretical and methodological traditions and empirical foci, such an aspiration would be most overzealous. I hope, however, to have explored some of material culture studies' possibilities and potentials, problems and perils as seen from a design history perspective.

The Italian design theoretician and historian Raimonda Riccini has proposed to divide the many widely differing approaches to the history of material culture into two groups according to their fundamental attitude towards the artifact: the history *of artifacts*—those considering objects to be the *subject* of historical research—and the history *through artifacts*—those considering objects to be *documents* of historical research:

It is my hypothesis that the history of industrial design represents an opportunity for an integration of these two approaches, an integration in which artifacts would be treated as both *subjects* and as *documents* of research.²⁰²

Moving from material culture studies to a cultural history of industrial design, it is befitting to mention an instructive lesson provided by Steven Lubar in *Learning From Things*:

A technological artifact should be regarded as, to use [anthropologist Clifford] Geertz' term, a "cultural phenomenon," like any other cultural phenomenon, because it makes for better historical explanation.²⁰³

Substituting designed/design for his technological/technology, I will argue with Lubar that if we privilege design—or more commonly in design history; privilege some narrow, culturally constructed niche of design—and do not consider design part of culture, we risk being tossed back to the "heroic approach" of the Pevsnerian tradition. Because, as the Greek design historian Artemis Yagou has argued:

Designing does not primarily have to do with specifying the formal attributes of an artifact or system, as in the case of conventional art and design historical understanding, but with expressing the cultural content of this artifact or system. In this sense, it may be further argued that the history of design could be conceived not as a history of objects but of ideas.²⁰⁴

Whereas I believe Yagou in the latter part of her argument introduces an unnecessary dichotomy (I would assert that the history of design is best conceived as a history of both

202. Raimonda Riccini, "History From Things: Notes on the History of Industrial Design" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1998, p 56

203. Steven Lubar, "Learning from Technological Things" in Kingery (ed.), *op.cit.* p 32

204. Artemis Yagou, "Rethinking Design History From an Evolutionary Perspective: Background and Implications" in *The Design Journal*, Vol. 8, No 3, 2005, p 53

ideas and objects), her call for an increased emphasis on design as culture has my full support.

3.6 Conclusion: A cultural history of industrial design

Introductorily, I asserted that design is not art and that hence design history should not be considered part of or equivalent to art history. However—substitute the wider notion of culture for art, and we have a completely different situation. It should be quite clear from the discussions above that design is a thoroughly cultural phenomenon, and consequently that design history can be approached as cultural history.

Whereas historians traditionally have flocked to political history and the later popularity of social history, cultural history has experienced a considerable upsurge and renewal over the last decades. So much so, in fact, to warrant the epithet “the new cultural history”.²⁰⁵ Like “the new art history” discussed above, it is a complex and heterogeneous movement and can thus not be treated extensively here. One of the most representative and influential works is the 1989 volume fittingly entitled *The New Cultural History*, edited by the American historian Lynn Hunt.²⁰⁶ The book examines existing models, theories and methodologies for the history of culture and presents examples of new research on a variety of topics.

But what good can come of enlisting industrial design as a subject matter for cultural history? As Hunt warns us:

[W]ithout developing [some] sense of cohesion or interaction between topics,.. a cultural history defined topically could degenerate into an endless search for new cultural practices to describe.²⁰⁷

For design history I believe the benefits consist of a cure for myopia. A cultural history of industrial design help design historians see design as “any other cultural phenomenon”—i.e. not giving privilege to the artefacts, actors, institutions and structures we study. As Lubar stated, it simply “makes for better historical explanation”, as a broader outlook facilitates unforeseen contexts, relations and connections.

As an early contribution to “the new cultural history”, the book can be seen as an attempt to further such a “sense of cohesion or interaction between topics”, and it is thus somewhat cautious and tentative in its form. As Hunt concludes her introduction:

For the moment, as this volume shows, the accent in cultural history is on close examination—of texts, of pictures, and of actions—and on open-mindedness to what those

205. Sometimes also known as the “linguistic turn”, especially in the humanities more generally. For a brief introduction, see e.g.: Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century—From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997) p 118-133

206. Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1989)

207. Lynn Hunt, “Introduction” in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *op.cit.* p 9

examinations will reveal, rather than on elaboration of new master narratives or social theories[.]²⁰⁸

“The new cultural history” involves critical examinations of Marxism, the Annales school, Michel Foucault’s “archaeology of knowledge”²⁰⁹ as well as more recent poststructuralist approaches,²¹⁰ but does not propose a new “grand theory”. As a theoretically tolerant and topically inclusive field, cultural history thus provides fertile ground for developing new histories of industrial design.

A decade later, Hunt teamed up with American sociologist Victoria E. Bonnell for a reassessment of “the new cultural history” through their 1999 edited volume *Beyond the Cultural Turn*.²¹¹ One of their main general concerns here is to move beyond the old trench warfare between positivism and relativism, acknowledging that culture is neither a mere reflection of more “fundamental” structures nor entirely symbolic or linguistic:

The focus on practice, narrative, and embodiment—whether of whole cultures, social groups, or individual selves—is meant to bypass that dilemma and restore a sense of social embeddedness without reducing everything to its social determinants.²¹²

Cultural history, then, must not only accept this complexity and the difficult dynamics of historical development, but readily

emphasize the relational process of identity formation, the conflict between competing narratives, the inherent tension between culture viewed as a system and culture viewed as practice, and the inevitable strain between continuity and transformation.²¹³

On a more particular level, and of principle interest here is Bonnell and Hunt’s recognition of the primacy of material culture as subject matter in recent cultural history. They describe material culture as

one of the arenas in which culture and social life most obviously and significantly intersect, where culture takes concrete form and those concrete forms make cultural codes more explicit. Work on furniture, guns, or clothing—to name some of the most striking examples—draws our attention to the material ways in which culture becomes part of everyday social experience and therefore becomes susceptible to change.²¹⁴

208. *Ibid.* p 22

209. As Hunt writes: “Although historians have been intrigued by Foucault’s trenchant criticisms, they have not taken his method—or anti-method—as a model for their practice.”: *Ibid.* p 8

210. There is for example an important critique of the all too often simplistic black-and-white dichotomy posed between positivism and relativism. Lloyd S. Kramer writes that “[b]oth positivism and relativism... ignore the dialogic conception of historical understanding, which recognizes that the past (other) is “always already” in the historian and the historian (self) is “always already” inscribed in a linguistic or philosophical past.” Kramer here draws on Dominick LaCapra and quotes his observation that “the comprehensive problem in inquiry is how to understand and to negotiate varying degrees of proximity and distance in the relation to the ‘other’ that is both outside and inside ourselves.”: Lloyd S. Kramer, “Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra” in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *op.cit.* p 124 and Dominick LaCapra, *History & Criticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985) p 140

211. Bonnell and Hunt (eds.), *op.cit.*

212. Bonnell and Hunt, *op.cit.* p 26

213. *Ibid.*

In other words; Bonnell and Hunt all but declare the (cultural) history of design to be not only part of, but at the very forefront of cultural history.

Perhaps many, or even most design historians would claim that their work falls under a broader notion of cultural history. (Still, design historians rarely make reference to ‘the new cultural history’; one exception being the British design historian Stephen Hayward).²¹⁵ Cultural historians studying design, on the other hand, seem to be fewer and farther between. The difference can be hard to define and is probably not all that important either. The pivotal claim for a cultural history of design is that one sees design not as a privileged subject matter but in principle as “any other cultural phenomenon”. In conclusion, then, I wish to briefly mention three recent books by cultural historians who in convincing ways have studied industrial design as a cultural phenomenon.

My claim that Jeffrey L. Meikle’s widely acclaimed book *American Plastic—A Cultural History* from 1995 is a cultural history of industrial design could perhaps be disputed, but only because it has proven pertinent to many fields.²¹⁶ A scholar of American studies—itsself an interdisciplinary field—Meikle moved into the field of design history already with his 1979 book on American interwar industrial design, and has recently made another important contribution to the field’s survey literature with his 2005 book *Design in the USA*.²¹⁷

With its far less conventional approach, *American Plastic* takes a road less travelled. Instead of sorting its subject matter by biographies, professional categories, chronological periods, design styles, industry segments, product types or other traditional classifications, Meikle here uses the material—plastic(s)—as an entrypoint, allowing him to pry open a cross section of all the above concepts and many more. The book’s core concern, though, is to trace the many and complex negotiations through which the many and shifting cultural identities of plastic(s) have been formed and transformed through time and society. As the design, mediation and reception of plastic products are protagonists of these fascinating negotiations, there should be no doubt that *American Plastic* is in full a cultural history of industrial design. Nonetheless, it has a much broader appeal, something that can be illustrated by the fact that the book won the 1996 Dexter Prize from the Society for the History of Technology.

Another cultural history of industrial design that resists easy categorisation is the American historian Regina Lee Blaszczyk’s *Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* from 2000.²¹⁸ It could just as rightfully be claimed for business history or the history of technology, a trait that in my opinion only makes it all the more interesting as a cultural history of industrial design.²¹⁹ *Imagining Consumers* shares the interest in consumption with the material culture studies approach discussed above. But this book is not so much about consumption patterns and practices,

214. *Ibid.* p 11

215. Hayward, *op.cit.* p 217

216. Jeffrey L. Meikle, *American Plastic—A Cultural History* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1995)

217. Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited—Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979) and Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Design in the USA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

218. Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000)

but—as the title indicates—more about how manufacturers by way of what Blaszczyk denotes as intermediaries—retailers, wholesalers, buyers, salesmen, advertising executives, market researchers, home economists, designers, etc.—strove to *imagine* consumers' needs and desires in order to design and develop commercially successful products. Blaszczyk thus proposes a very promising approach to bridging the production—consumption gap: “Focusing on these fashion brokers as the primary agents of innovation turns the canon of design history inside out and upside down.”²²⁰ In doing so, she is completely in line with the above mentioned proposition to focus on the arenas of negotiations between production and consumption put forward in various wordings by design historians John Heskett, John A. Walker and Grace Lees-Maffei,²²¹ as well as the historians of technology Ruth Oldenziel, *et al.* and Johan Schot and Adri Albert de la Bruheze.²²² In clear agreement with Blaszczyk, although using the term mediators rather than intermediaries,²²³ the latter two observes that

Mediation as a process of mutual articulation and alignment is influenced not only by the work of producers and users but also by the work of mediators and by the existence of institutional loci and arenas for mediation work.²²⁴

As a piece of design history, *Imagining Consumers* strongly dissociates itself from the “heroic approach”:

In terms of design, this book also departs from the reigning paradigms that emphasize elite objects and dismiss mass-market artifacts. Invented by connoisseurs, the notion of “good taste” obfuscates the diversity of Americans' material preferences and the messiness of the design process... For students of consumerism, however, the “masterpiece” approach is inherently flawed. Its emphasis on high-class definitions of beauty denies the historical significance of commonplace items, the building blocks of popular culture.²²⁵

Although I could not agree more with Blaszczyk's insistence on a design history more attuned to everyday, ordinary, mass-market products and particularly commend her

219. Here it could be mentioned that two years prior to the publication of Blaszczyk's book, the Italian design theoretician and historian Raimonda Riccini deplored that “the history of industrial design has, for a long time been able to ignore business history, just as the history of enterprise has been able to avoid a real confrontation with the history of products.” One might agree or disagree with this claim—Riccini does mention some well-known earlier exceptions concerning emblematic companies such as Wedgwood, Thonet and AEG—but Blaszczyk's book should be particularly warmly welcomed by those who are inclined to agree: Riccini, *op.cit.* p 43

220. Blaszczyk, *op.cit.* p 12

221. Heskett, *op.cit.* p 112-113, Walker, *op.cit.* p 27, 70 & 174-185 and Lees-Maffei, *op.cit.* p 3

222. Oldenziel, de la Bruhèze and de Wit, *op.cit.* p 107-139 and Schot and de la Bruheze, *op.cit.*

223. The way these two terms are used by Blaszczyk and Schot and de la Bruheze makes them virtually interchangeable, which is fairly unproblematic in this context. Bruno Latour, on the other hand, uses both terms, and distinctly separates their meaning. He reserves the term intermediary to designate something that conveys meaning without altering it in any way, whereas a mediator transforms the meaning on its way from one place to another: Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social—An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p 39

224. Schot and de la Bruheze, *op.cit.* The authors do not distinguish between the terms intermediary and mediator—they even refer to Blaszczyk's concept of *fashion intermediaries* as a prime example of what they are proposing: studies of *mediators*. (see note 13, p 234/290)

225. Blaszczyk, *op.cit.* p 273

efforts to examine a more complex and entangled design process, one might ask how long it is necessary and legitimate to keep on castigating ‘the “masterpiece” approach’. Whereas such work surely still is being produced, the amount of more progressive recent research could indicate that ‘the “masterpiece” approach’ no longer can be said to represent the ‘reigning paradigms’ design history.²²⁶

The third and last of my examples of a cultural history of industrial design is the American historian Paul Betts’ 2004 book *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Design*.²²⁷ In his study of postwar West German industrial design, Betts takes stand as a cultural historian who has chosen to study industrial design because it is an interesting cultural phenomenon. This apparently self-evident observation is important because this attitude and approach is essential in avoiding to treat design as some sort of privileged sphere, and escape the unfortunate situation in which—according to Betts -

design has yet to be fully accepted into mainstream scholarship, not least because it is still seen as a splashy academic newcomer whose achievements are better placed on the coffee table than the scholarly bookshelf.²²⁸

It is the analytical approach that makes the book so refreshing—not the subject matter, which is fairly conventional. One of the most obvious omissions is that of vehicles. Of course, demarcations of subject matter must be made, but one might argue that a history of German industrial design devoid of cars, airplanes and trains does seem somewhat skewed. Betts recognizes the limitations of these choices, and clarifies that his study does not pretend to cover the full spectre of industrial design, but rather deals with a more limited sphere of everyday household objects (and the institutions involved with their negotiation):

But unlike other design studies, this book is no detailed monograph on any one of these object groups. Of uppermost concern here is why these commonplace wares assumed such heightened cultural significance in the 1950s.”²²⁹

Betts’ objective is thus not so much to revise the customary demarcations and categories of traditional design history, but rather to enmesh design in the wider realm of (cultural) history.

226. Although in her review of Blaszczyk’s book the British design historian Penny Sparke claimed that “[s]he is right, of course”, but demurs to another side to Blaszczyk’s approach. While recognizing it as “an important and timely book” and lauding its interdisciplinary accomplishments, Sparke states that “[i]t is, for me, however, perhaps at its least effective when considered as an extension of the existing body of literature in the area of design history. While it clearly addresses new and important questions from this perspective, it fails to link stylistic change with other significant historical shifts outlined here, such as that from gentility to domesticity, or from women as housewives to women as consumers.”: Penny Sparke, “Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning. By Regina Lee Blaszczyk” [book review] in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2001, p 346

227. Betts, *op.cit.*

228. *Ibid.* p 3

229. *Ibid.* p 2

Within its defined scope, two of the book's major arguments are particularly stimulating. The first is an extensive and patent line of reasoning demonstrating that the Nazi period did *not*—as the mythopoeics of much modernist histories would have it—represent a rupture in German modernist design.²³⁰ The second is a comprehensive and well-balanced treatment of the “unholy” but very popular 1950s design style derogatorily nicknamed *Nierentisch* (kidney table).²³¹ As argued above, such design, not conforming to the ideals of the modernist design elites, has all too often been ignored in traditional design history.

Pointing out these three books by Meikle, Blaszczyk and Betts rather than other ones does of course imply that I in some sense consider them exemplary. But by exemplary, I do not mean ideal. These books are examples more than exemplars. They are good demonstrations of how cultural histories of industrial design can look like, but this is not to say that one should emulate them. What they have in common, and what make them relevant examples in this discussion, is first of all a broad approach to their subject matter, where design is culture, and design history is cultural history. In different ways, they are all very inclusive in terms of what kind of material and questions that are considered relevant and interesting to a history of design. Furthermore, these books demonstrate the advantages of moving back and forth between things and thoughts, between mind and matter, between the ideal and the real—an approach that will be pursued throughout this study.

Now that I have explained what kind of history this study aspires to be, it seems appropriate to ask how this ambition is to be achieved. The next chapter will discuss some theoretical and methodological concepts from an adjacent field of study that have been little explored in design history but that might prove to be a rewarding import and that will underpin the ensuing empirical investigations.

230. *Ibid.* p 23-72. This part of the book expands on earlier work on the same topic by Betts himself and by the British design historian John Heskett: Paul Betts, “The Bauhaus and National Socialism—a Dark Chapter of Modernism” in Jeannine Fiedler and Peter Feierabend (eds.), *Bauhaus* (Köln: Könemann, 1999) p 34-41, John Heskett, “Design in Inter-War Germany” in Wendy Kaplan (ed), *Designing Modernity—The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995) and John Heskett, “Modernism and Archaism in the Third Reich” in *Block* No. 3, 1980, p 13-24

231. The entire chapter three is devoted to the debates on this phenomenon, especially the strategies by which the design elites sought to convince people that these organic, modern forms were not the *correct* modernist design they advocated: Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) p 109-138

4 The Seamless Web of Socio-Design

4.1 Introduction

The title of this chapter is a paraphrase of a metaphor well-established in the history of technology; *the seamless web of sociotechnology*. This concept has been coined in the moving away from the traditional distinctions between technical, social, economic and political aspects of technological development. The seminal work of the American historian of technology Thomas P. Hughes on sociotechnical systems has been highly influential in this respect.¹ In his studies of how electric power networks were built and developed, he found that many of the most prominent actors and problems in the development process were not of a technological nature per se, but spanned a vast array of topics and fields such as e.g. law, economics, politics, etc.² The point is that technology is not formed isolated from society—technology and society are formed and transformed simultaneously and in correlation.³

Hughes' analysis is not the main issue here, but by paraphrasing the metaphor of the seamless web, we are supplied with a notion that can serve as a basis for the construction of a theoretical and conceptual framework as well as a methodological repertoire for design studies.⁴ The paraphrase's underlying analogy should be fairly evident. Industrial design is just as little autonomous as phenomenon, process and result as technology is. Therefore, our perspective should be to consider the relation between society and design as a seamless web of sociodesign.

-
1. The phrase *the seamless web of sociotechnology* is often attributed to Hughes, but to my knowledge he has never used this exact wording. He has, however, written that “the web is seamless”, and that he believes “encompassing systems should be labelled sociotechnical systems rather than technological systems.”: Thomas P. Hughes, “Edison and electric light” in Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman (eds.), *The Social Shaping of Technology* [2. ed.—first published 1985] (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1999) p 58 and Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983) p 465. His notion of *the seamless web* is most explicitly theoretically expressed in: Thomas P. Hughes, “The Seamless Web: Technology, Science, Etcetera, Etcetera” in *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1986, p 281-292
 2. Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983)
 3. For a more concise presentation of Hughes' theoretical perspectives on technological development, see: Thomas P. Hughes, “The Evolution of Large Technological Systems” in Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes and Trevor J. Pinch (Eds.), *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987) p 51-82
 4. It is interesting to note here that the Argentine/German/Italian design theoretician Tomás Maldonado has criticised Hughes and other historians of technology contributing to the sociotechnical systems approach for focusing too uniformly on technological macro systems which are “simultaneously *excellent* and *very poor* examples” for exploring the society-technology relationship. Excellent, Maldonado states, “because their connection with society is so evident”, but poor “precisely because their probative obviousness prevents less evident, but no less important, aspects of the society-technology relationship from emerging in the overall assessment.” One might agree or disagree, but his observation is a challenge to be kept in mind by design historians, whose subject matter rarely is macro systems: Tomás Maldonado, “Taking Eyeglasses Seriously” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2001, p 34

As I have argued in the previous chapter, design history does not have a very well-defined theoretical framework and methodological apparatus, nor has this seemed to be a particularly prioritized area of inquiry. The many problematic aspect of the heritage from art history have been recognized and questioned, but the field could in my view do with a more thorough debate on these matters. The exploration of alternative, additional and complementary references and sources of inspiration has begun, but few excursions have been made in the direction I am proposing in the following: recent developments in the sociology and history of technology.

In a climate where neither industrial design practitioners, industrial design researchers nor industrial design historians accept the old notion of design as some sort of applied art, I would hazard the assertion that industrial design has more in common with technology when considered as a social and cultural phenomenon. Thus design historians may find that the sociology and history of technology can provide a very appropriate theoretical framework and methodological repertoire also for studies of industrial design. This chapter discusses some concepts from these adjacent fields that might be of particular value to design history—concepts that also underpin the present study.

4.2 History of technology, SCOT and STS

After having exhibited locomotives and scientific instruments side by side with furniture and textiles for several decades, London's South Kensington Museum (opened in 1857 in the wake of the Great Exhibition of 1851) was at the turn of the century divided and became what is now two separate institutions: the Science Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Without reading too much into it, this still seems to be an emblematic event in the separation of the historical representations of the spheres of science and technology on the one hand and design and the decorative arts on the other.⁵ A reunion of the two London museums is most unlikely, but I believe that design historians and historians of technology should strive not to perpetuate the division of labour epitomised by the institutional structure of this example.

In a special section on technology and design in a 1997 issue of *Technology and Culture*, the Society for the History of Technology's journal, the American design historian Barry M. Katz described the industrial designer as one "who domesticates new technology and makes it available for human use", and on this basis argued for tighter bonds between the history of technology and design history:

5. The British design historian John Heskett has observed that the occasional overlap in exhibited objects between the two museums does not mitigate the divide much: "Wedgwood pottery may be shown at the Science Museum, but in the context of an exhibition on the scientific research of Josiah Wedgwood. Radios have been exhibited at the V and A, but with technical developments being subordinate to aesthetic considerations": John Heskett, "Industrial Design" in Hazel Conway (ed.), *Design History—A Student's Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987) p 126

This mutual dependency suggests that at the very least the study of design can be deepened by an exposure to the more deeply rooted history of technology, and the study of technology invigorated by new tendencies in the history and theory of design.⁶

I believe there is much to gain from accepting this challenge and explore the potential of a closer integration and interaction between the history of technology and design history.⁷

To make a crude and certainly unjust generalisation, one might say that historians of technology have been occupied predominantly with the content and performance of artefacts (and systems) whereas design historians traditionally have focused on their aesthetics and appearance. Despite the obvious simplification of such a divide, it should be evident that there is a great potential for synergy effects in crossing it back and forth. Some historians of technology, such as Thomas P. Hughes, James J. Flink and Wiebe E. Bijker have already proved the vantages of such cross-fertilization,⁸ but have by no means exhausted its promise. I would also argue that much recent design history, e.g. by writers such as Jeffrey L. Meikle, David Gartman and Alison J. Clarke,⁹ has much to contribute to a joint venture, especially by embedding the "nuts and bolts" in contexts of form, image, identity, ideology and meaning.

The history of technology has through its concern for the complexity and multi-dimensionality of technological development provided good models for understanding design processes beyond the mystique of artistic creation. The major merit of design history is its ability to analyse and critically reflect on the seemingly erratic and less palpable aspects of our material culture. As the American architectural historian Dennis Doordan put it:

Design historians... recognize as eloquent what most historians find mute: things. Design history's insight into the eloquence of things is one of its most distinctive contributions to history as a general field of intellectual endeavour.¹⁰

-
6. Barry M. Katz, "Technology and Design: A New Agenda" in *Technology and Culture* Vol. 38, No. 2, 1997, p 453. In a recent follow-up, Katz states with reference to the rapid changes in technological and social developments and contemporary design practice that "Given all that has transpired in the intervening decade, it should not be surprising that this bit of shorthand no longer seems satisfactory." This reservation does not, however, render his original point any less poignant regarding historical studies, and Katz maintains that "'design' is actually the key to making sense of modern technology": Barry M. Katz, "Intelligent Design" in *Technology and Culture* Vol. 47, No. 2, 2006, p 381 & 387
 7. This conviction formed the basis for my organizing a session entitled "Our Common Past? Conversations between History of Technology and Design History" at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Society for the History of Technology (Las Vegas, October 12-15). Panelists were Barry M. Katz, Penny Sparke, Per Østby and Kjetil Fallan. Hans-Joachim Braun chaired the session, and Martina Hessler acted as commentator.
 8. See e.g. Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis—A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm, 1870-1970* (New York: Viking, 1989), Thomas P. Hughes, *Human-Built World—How to think about technology and culture* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004), James J. Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988) and Wiebe E. Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs—Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995)
 9. Jeffrey L. Meikle, *American Plastic—A Cultural History* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1995), David Gartman, *Auto Opium—A Social History of American Automobile Design* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994) and Alison J. Clarke, *Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America* (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999)
 10. Dennis Doordan, "On History" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995, p 78

Just how important design history can be to the history of technology has been neatly pointed out by the American historian of engineering design Henry Petroski:

Understanding how and why our physical surroundings look and work the way they do provides considerable insight into the nature of technological change and the workings of even the most complex of modern technology.¹¹

Of course, design history is not just about the way things look and work, i.e. how technology is given form. The aesthetics, ethics, symbolism, authority and emotivity of artefacts take on a whole new level of meaning and significance when inscribed in ideological, political, social, cultural and consumption contexts.

The merits and challenges of design history was the topic of the last chapter, so here I will limit my scope to a brief discussion of how some historians of technology have dealt with industrial design and how this might benefit design history. The above mentioned journal *Technology and Culture*, published by the Society for the History of Technology for half a century could have served as an arena for this discussion, but is too voluminous to survey briefly enough.¹² So here I will instead focus on a few central books. As I started out this chapter by making reference to Thomas P. Hughes, it is only befitting that his work makes up the first example.

Hughes' widely acclaimed 1989 book on the history of technology in the USA, *American Genesis*, provides the best entry point.¹³ Even if viewed as a history of technology proper, this book is not only highly insightful, convincing and well-composed—it is packed with material of great value to design historians, embracing as it does a wide range of topics from invention, scientific practice, engineering, product development, production systems, industrial management, technological systems, economics and politics. However, *American Genesis* has more to offer design historians than this sort of thick complementary insight; it contains elements of more specific design history as well. This is particularly true of the chapter mainly devoted to how European designers, architects and artists envisioned and interpreted American industry and technology in their advocacy of a genuinely modern culture.¹⁴

11. Henry Petroski, *The Evolution of Useful Things* [Orig. publ. 1992] (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) p 31

12. As a mere indication of this potential I will briefly mention four relatively recent examples: Eugene Levy has studied a commercially unsuccessful project where Edison Electric Institute in 1966 hired Henry Dreyfuss and Associates to design power pylons: Eugene Levy, "The Aesthetics of Power: High-Voltage Transmission Systems and the American Landscape" in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1997, p 575-607. Ronald Kline and Trevor Pinch has shown how users through their interpretations, modifications and feedback influenced early car design: Ronald Kline and Trevor Pinch, "Users as Agents of Technological Change: The Social Construction of the Automobile in the Rural United States" in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1996, p 763-795. Also on car design, Rudi Volti has analysed its relations to geography, economy and politics: Rudi Volti, "A Century of Automobility" in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1996, p 663-785. Finally, Michael Brian Schiffer has introduced the concept of the *cultural imperative* to better understand the complexity of the often esoteric process from idea to commodity in product development: Michael Brian Schiffer, "Cultural Imperatives and Product Development: The Case of the Shirt-Pocket Radio" in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1993, p 98-113. For a historiographic analysis of the first decades of *Technology and Culture*, see: John M. Staudenmaier, *Technology's Storytellers: Reweaving the Human Fabric* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985)

13. Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis—A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm, 1870-1970* (New York: Viking, 1989)

The originality in Hughes' treatment of design lies primarily on the contextual level; that he at all incorporates the subject in a project fundamentally about the history of technology. His selection of subject matter within this field, however, is rather conventional, focusing on famous and heroic figures like e.g. Peter Behrens, Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier. The same can largely be said of the chapter on technology and culture in his more recent book *Human-Built World*.¹⁵ Given his stance as a historian of technology, it is also somewhat surprising that he devotes more attention to architecture and art than to industrial design. Furthermore, the material is structured in such a manner that in Hughes' account, design is placed in the category "cultural factors", something that to a design historian appears to counteract a close enough integration of design into his otherwise pervasive sociotechnical systems. In the case of design, it might thus seem as though his web is not quite seamless enough.

Another reputable American historian of technology, Ruth Schwartz Cowan, is the author of the one book from this discipline which probably has had the most profound influence on design history. Her 1983 *More Work for Mother*—a study presenting a fresh approach to the history of household technology and appliances, effectively challenging the conventional technological/social and production/consumption dichotomies—has been a strong source of inspiration especially for feminist design historians.¹⁶ In a more recent publication, *A Social History of American Technology*, these perspectives are further cultivated and applied to a wider subject matter in a broadly synthetic work. Based on the premise that *Homo faber* is just as appropriate a name for our species as is *Homo sapiens*, Cowan here argues that

The *social* history of technology... integrat[es] the history of technology with the rest of human history. It assumes that objects have affected the ways in which people work, govern, cook, transport, communicate: the ways in which they live. It also assumes that the ways in which people live have affected the objects that they invent, manufacture, and use. A social history of technology, in short, assumes a mutual relationship between society and technology: it also assumes that changes in one can, and have, induced changes in the other.¹⁷

The relevance to design history is so evident and important that it made the American design historian Victor Margolin comment that "the overlap between Cowan's social history of technology with material that would be suitable for a history of design" gave hope for a future, "more broadly constituted history of design".¹⁸

A good example of Cowan's approach which is particularly relevant to design history is her account of innovation in 19th century USA. The genius individual is certainly

14. *Ibid.* p 295-352

15. Thomas P. Hughes, *Human-Built World—How to think about technology and culture* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004) p 111-152

16. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother—The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983)

17. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *A Social History of American Technology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 3

18. Victor Margolin, "Design History in the United States, 1977-2000" in Victor Margolin, *The Politics of the Artificial* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) p 157

acknowledged, but not romanticized.¹⁹ Cowan stresses that innovation—both invention, development and diffusion—is fundamentally collaborative (just as design is, one might add). Yes, we do meet Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell, but we also meet their collaborators whose resources and services were essential to inventive development—be that technical and scientific skills, mechanical dexterity, draughtsmanship, legal advice, financial counsel, even those providing food and emotional support are—at least symbolically—acknowledged, plus, of course, those who put up the financial backing and managerial systems.²⁰ The importance and influence of the light bulb as well as the telephone—both as technologies and as inventions—is far better understood when viewed as systems rather than as singular phenomena. In other words; both people and objects become more eloquent when considered parts of collectives and systems. Much by the same token, her account of the emergence of the American System of Manufacture is appealing because she gives due attention to the economic and political interests not merely as background factors, but as integrated elements of the system.²¹ However, because of Cowan’s priority of large sociotechnical systems combined with the ambition to cover many subjects as well as three centuries, her attention to product development and design is limited—although some passages, such as her account of the intricate workings of the military-industrial-academic complex in the development of both military and commercial aircraft design after World War II, form notable exceptions.²²

Whereas Cowan’s project is a *social* history of technology, a recent book by the Swedish historian Mikael Hård and the American sociologist Andrew Jamison, *Hubris and Hybrids*, proposes a *cultural* history of technology.²³ In terms of geography, time span and topics, this book paints an even broader historical canvas, but its more frequent selection of examples from industrial design and the matching of technological ideas with industrial practice make it highly relevant to design history.

Hård and Jamison call their approach to history “cultural appropriation”, described as “a process by which novelty is brought under human control; it is a matter of re-creating our societies and our selves so that new products and concepts make sense.” This approach is very enticing, much because it allows for more complex narratives than traditional ones—such as those classic narrative strategies Hayden White has dubbed

19. In an observation later in the book, Cowan points to the origins of a very interesting intellectual paradox regarding the personality cult and hero worship surrounding “great inventors”: “Students of intellectual history will know that there is a common pattern in the history of ideas: when ideas are very powerful, they are sometimes adopted even by opposing sides in the same debate. Thus in the decades before and after the Civil War, some advocates of industrialization adopted some ideas of their Romantic opponents. We can see this pattern developing, for example, in the ways in which Americans began talking about inventors. Several successful inventors—Whitney, Fulton, Morse, Edison, and Bell—had literally become national celebrities, almost on par with such political celebrities as Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln. Poems applauding their achievements were published in newspapers; streets, towns, and babies were named after them. A surprising number of people talked and wrote about inventors using the language, and the concepts, of Romanticism.”: Cowan, *op.cit.* p 209-210

20. *Ibid.* p 119-147

21. *Ibid.* p 78-82

22. *Ibid.* p 256-265

23. Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison, *Hubris and Hybrids—A Cultural History of Technology and Science* (New York: Routledge, 2005)

romance and tragedy (the “heroic approach” and is more recent opposite). By way of cultural appropriation, the authors strive to tell “dialectical stories of hybridization, of combination, both in terms of practice and identities, institutions and organizations, and discourses and disciplines.”²⁴

However, when it comes to design, results of these promises of complexity, hybridization and combination are hard to find. Most of the material related to design is placed in a chapter on “artistic appropriation” and design is described as “popular art”.²⁵ Designers (and design theoreticians) are discussed alongside painters, photographers and poets, and are thus classified as artists. The focus on form and aesthetics as well as “heroic” figures results in an account that rarely surpasses the master narrative of design history—although the contextualisation here is a somewhat different and more interesting one.²⁶ In this respect, Hård and Jamison’s treatment of design resembles that of Thomas Hughes discussed above.

Surely, this criticism is somewhat unfair. *Hubris and Hybrids* is not a book on design history, and as it is a very broad and highly synthetic work, it could hardly be expected to provide any exhaustive analysis of a century’s development of design. The authors’ have chosen this format in purposeful opposition to what they consider a tendency among historians of technology “to write ever more detailed accounts of ever more limited scope.”²⁷

The simple fact that *Hubris and Hybrids* is co-authored by a historian and a sociologist can exemplify the increasing interaction and cooperation in recent history and sociology of technology. This tendency is in keeping with developments in the broader “parent” fields after the so-called cultural/linguistic/historic turn in history and sociology in general, which have led to a blurring of the disciplinary borders. The mutual rapprochement can perhaps be described as a “nervous romance”: historians’ interest in sociological theory and methods has given rise to both scepticism and enthusiasm in both camps, as has sociologists’ engagement with history.²⁸ Bearing the fundamental differences between history and sociology in mind, I believe that there is much to gain from developing the interaction and cooperation already *en route* and of which Hård and Jamison’s work is a good example.

Another example is the thorough theoretical contribution to the history of technology made by the Dutch sociologist Wibe E. Bijker, especially in his 1995 book *Of Bicycles*,

24. *Ibid.* p 4. For White’s theory of narrative strategies in the writing of history, see: Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987)

25. Hård and Jamison, *op.cit.* p 147

26. *Ibid.* p 145-167

27. *Ibid.* p 293

28. This development dates back at least to the 1970s. As the American sociologist Victoria E. Bonnell and historian Lynn Hunt has pointed out: “Although the cultural turn has swept through the precincts of both historians and historical sociologists, practitioners of these disciplines have not always moved in the same direction; nor has the relationship between these disciplines always been comfortable.”: Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, “Introduction” in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999) p 5. For a survey of this development, see e.g. Terrence McDonald, “What We Talk about When We Talk about History: The Conversations of History and Sociology” in Terrence McDonald (ed.), *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996) p 91-118

Bakelites, and Bulbs.²⁹ As most sociologists, Bijker's primary concern seems to be with the formulation of theory, and the book's agenda is thus—as the subtitle reveals—to propose a theory of sociotechnical change. Although this effort is both commendable and highly interesting, I will here focus on another aspect of the book. In order to formulate his theory of sociotechnical change, Bijker analyses—as indicated by the main title—three comprehensive case studies from the history of technology; bicycles, bakelites and bulbs (or rather: fluorescent lighting). Only the first two will be commented on here.

Just how relevant this book is to design historians becomes strikingly evident in the first of the three case studies, which, I would argue, is actually more of a history of design than it is a history of technology. Here, Bijker meticulously maps and analyses the development of the design of the bicycle from its invention through a myriad of mutations, modifications, marvels and misfits until the conceptual layout and formal configuration stabilized as that we can recognize in the design of today's bicycles. Through its thick description approach, this account introduces us to some of the core concepts of Bijker's theory of sociotechnical change, such as the crucial role of a wide variety of what he calls "relevant social groups" and their attention to different problems and solutions in the development process, and the dismantling of the linear evolutionary model so common in traditional history of technology.³⁰ This study is thus especially valuable to any design historian interested in typological development.

Bijker continues the construction of the conceptual frame for his theory of sociotechnical change in the second case study, the Bakelite innovation process. Apart from the further theoretical development presented in this chapter, this study is of particular interest to design historians because the author here explicitly introduces industrial designers as one of the relevant social groups involved in a process of sociotechnical change alongside e.g. users and primary, semi- and manufactured goods producers.³¹ However, and as Bijker readily admits, his treatment of industrial design here is brief and rather limited. He has elsewhere argued that the history of technology would benefit considerably from greater attention to industrial design and that this would "render[] the web even more seamless."³² But his approach to the topic is refreshing, especially his emphasis on the designers' role in improving manufacturability and the mutual influence between plastic materials and design practice and ideology.³³

That this chapter began with an introduction to the notion of *the seamless web of sociotechnology* and the historian Thomas Hughes' theories on technological systems and hitherto has paused at the sociologist Wiebe E. Bijker's theory of sociotechnical change is no coincidence. Because it was Hughes and Bijker who, together with the British sociologist Trevor Pinch, edited what could be called the founding text of the theory since known as the social construction of technology (SCOT), *The Social*

29. Bijker, *op.cit.*

30. *Ibid.* p 19-100

31. *Ibid.* p 179-188

32. Wiebe E. Bijker, "The Social Construction of Bakelite: Toward a Theory of Invention" in Bijker, Hughes and Pinch (Eds.), *op.cit.* p 179

33. Although Bijker here largely takes his cue from: Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979)

Construction of Technological Systems, first published in 1987.³⁴ This point of cohesion is augmented by the fact that the contributors include the historian Ruth Schwartz Cowan, who critically but constructively assessed the relationship between the history and the sociology of technology.³⁵

One of the most interesting methodological issues raised in this publication is Pinch and Bijker's concern for "the asymmetric focus of analysis": the "preference for successful innovations" in the history of technology "seems to lead scholars to assume that the success of an artifact is an explanation of its subsequent development."³⁶ To counter this bias, Pinch and Bijker request that "failures" must be given as much attention and studied in the same way as "successes". The relevance of this claim to design history should be clear, as commercially, functionally, aesthetically (or otherwise) "unsuccessful" designs is clearly a neglected field of study. A partial exception might be found in the work of the American historian of engineering design Henry Petroski, who has devoted due attention to design failures.³⁷ SCOT has, however, been criticized for several reasons—most notably it has been accused of more or less replacing technological determinism with social determinism. It has also been deemed inept at dealing with the materiality of artifacts: "social constructivism denies the obduracy of objects".³⁸ Furthermore, SCOT's focus on closure and stabilization as key elements in sociotechnical change has been criticized for simplifying the role of conflict in the history of technology.³⁹

By and large, one might say that SCOT has generated considerable controversy as well as fascination across a range of disciplines, and has also in design history inspired some very interesting research.⁴⁰ SCOT not only functioned as a common arena for historians and sociologists of technology, but has also been essential in the consolidation of science and technology studies (STS) as a distinct field of study.⁴¹ Besides SCOT, the STS field has generated much theoretical and methodological output which I believe has great potential in terms of improving the theoretical and methodological framework of design history, and it is to some of these trajectories we now shall turn.⁴²

-
34. Bijker, Hughes and Pinch (Eds.), *op.cit.* Although the SCOT programme was laid out by Pinch and Bijker three years earlier in: Trevor Pinch and Wiebe Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other" in *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1984, p 399-441
35. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The Consumption Junction: A Proposal for Research Strategies in the Sociology of Technology" in Bijker, Hughes and Pinch (Eds.), *op.cit.* p 261-280
36. Trevor J. Pinch and Wiebe E. Bijker, "The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other" in Bijker, Hughes and Pinch (Eds.), *op.cit.* p 22
37. Henry Petroski, *To Engineer Is Human—The Role of Failure in Successful Design* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985) and Henry Petroski, *The Evolution of Useful Things* [Org. publ. 1992] (New York: Vintage Books, 1994)
38. Madeleine Akrich, "The De-scription of Technological Objects" in Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (eds.), *Shaping Technology / Building Society—Studies in sociotechnical change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) p 206
39. Mikael Hård, "Beyond Harmony and Consensus: A Social Conflict Approach to Technology" in *Science, Technology and Human Values*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1993, p 408-432

4.3 Actor-Network Theory

“The things,” said Ford Prefect quietly, “are also people.”⁴³

Laconically commenting to his less travelled companions marvelling at the exotic ensemble of guests and the spectacular interior design of the restaurant End of the Universe, the protagonist of Douglas Adams’ science fiction saga *The Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* quite literally means that *the things are also people*. Albeit in a slightly less verbatim sense, the dismantling of the axiomatic distinction between human and non-human actors is one of the core issues of Actor-Network Theory (ANT). This rather unconventional outlook will require closer attention, but first ANT needs a presentation.

One of the more prevalent critiques of SCOT and other social constitutionalist outlooks is that of one-sidedness; that it is overly concerned with the influence of social relations upon technology and underplays the influence of technology upon social relations. Recent STS thinking has tried to overcome this tenacious dichotomy, arguing that “it is mistaken to think of technology and society as separate spheres influencing each other: technology and society are mutually constitutive.”⁴⁴ ANT can be seen as an attempt to create a theoretical framework better suited to articulate this acknowledgment, the concept was first coined in the latter half of the 1980s chiefly by the French philosopher/anthropologist/sociologist Bruno Latour, the French sociologist Michel Callon and the British sociologist John Law. To keep this discussion at reasonable length, I will for the most part focus on the work of the former.⁴⁵

At the heart of ANT lies the ambition to treat “entities and materialities as enacted and relational effects” and to “explore the configuration and reconfiguration of those

-
40. See e.g. Louise Purbrick, “The Dream Machine: Charles Babbage and His Imaginary Computers” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1991, p 9-23, O. A. van Nierop, A. C. M. Blankendaal and C. J. Overbeeke, “The Evolution of the Bicycle: A Dynamic Systems Approach” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997 p 253-267, Paul Atkinson, “The (In)Difference Engine—Explaining the Disappearance of Diversity in the Design of the Personal Computer” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000 p 59-72, Arwen P. Mohun, “Designed for Thrills and Safety: Amusement Parks and the Commodification of Risk, 1880-1929” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001, p 291-306, Douglas N. Lantry, “Dress for Egress: The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum’s Apollo Spacesuit Collection” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001, p 343-359 and Paul Atkinson, “Man in a Briefcase: The Social Construction of the Laptop Computer and the Emergence of a Type Form” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2005 p 191-205. The potential of SCOT to design history is also mentioned in: Raimonda Riccini, “Innovation as a Field of Historical Knowledge for Industrial Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2001, p 30 and Raimonda Riccini, “History From Things: Notes on the History of Industrial Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1998, p 54
 41. For a comprehensive introduction to the STS field of research, see e.g.: Sheila Jasanoff, Gerald E. Markle, James C. Petersen and Trevor Pinch (eds.), *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (Thousand Oaks & London: Sage, 1995) and Sergio Sismondo, *An introduction to Science and Technology Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)
 42. A group of STS scholars put together a 2004 special issue of *Design Issues* on STS and design studies that contains valuable perspectives on the social complexity of design, but unfortunately lacks any discussion of their applicability to historical research: Edward Woodhouse and Jason W. Patton, “Design by Society: Science and Technology Studies and the Social Shaping of Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2004, p 1-12. The same must be said of a recent follow-up article: Jack Ingram, Elizabeth Shove, and Matthew Watson, “Products and Practices: Selected Concepts from Science and Technology Studies and from Social Theories of Consumption and Practice” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2007, p 3-16.

relations.”⁴⁶ Another fundamental aspect is the de-stabilization of ontological categories. Latour argues that conventional dichotomies such as technology-society and nature-culture must be overcome.⁴⁷ The resemblance to the notion of the *seamless web of sociotechnology* and Hughes’ term *sociotechnical systems* is evident. But rather than systems, ANT makes use of the metaphor of *network* in order to highlight the relational aspect between the nodes, or entities. However, it is important to note that network in ANT parlance is not (necessarily) a tangible entity like telephone networks or sewer systems, nor an organizational mode. As Latour defines it: “Network is a concept, not a thing out there. It is a tool to help describe something, not what is being described... [It] is the trace left behind by some moving agent.”⁴⁸

Latour uses the term actor-network to describe how the development and distribution of facts and artefacts happens through negotiations between different interest groups. Facts and artefacts are seen as products of science and technology; scientific theories and technological objects. To a design historian, this would correspond to design ideologies and products. In any case, the point is that facts and artefacts develop as a result of negotiations between the various actors involved, applying strategies preconditioned by their different interpretations, agendas, needs and desires. Actors construct these networks through persuasion and enrolment—in short, the accumulation and execution of power. The dynamics often take the form of conflicts, both within the network in question as well as in the relations to other networks and elements. According to Latour, it is the extension and momentum of the network that regulate which facts and artefacts that prevail. An important aspect though, is that it is not just the facts and artefacts that change in the course of negotiations. Also the negotiators (actors) change in such a process, characterized by conflicts and transition.

The networks can be large and intricate, and the roles of the various actors highly dissimilar. But who are these actors? Imagining the analysis of a design process, a general, tentative, and far from exhausting list could look something like this: company management and board, product planners, product management, in-house designers, consultant designers, engineers, technicians, production workers, sales department, marketing department, advertising agency, trade unions, interest groups, media, distribution system, sales channels, and a multitude of user groups. The list can no doubt be expanded and modified, depending on the character of the case study. But hopefully, it can at least indicate the contours of a network’s complexity.

43. Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe: The Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy 2* (London: Pan Books, 1980) p 83

44. Donald MacKenzie and Judy Wajcman, “Introductory essay: the social shaping of technology” in MacKenzie and Wajcman (eds.), *op.cit.* p 23

45. For an early example of Callon’s contribution to the development of ANT, see e.g.: Michel Callon, “Society in the Making: The Study of Technology as a Tool for Sociological Analysis” in Bijker, Hughes and Pinch (Eds.), *op.cit.* p 83-103

46. John Law, *After Method—Mess in Social Science Research* (London: Routledge, 2004) p 157

47. Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) and Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993)

48. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social—An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p 131-132

Questions we could ask in consequence of such an outline could be: Which meanings, attitudes and positions do the various actors have? How do they construct the network? How, where and by what means do the negotiations take place? How and where is power distributed in the network? Which facts and artefacts gain the largest momentum and prevail? Here these questions shall remain open, but it should be clear now that thinking about design in terms of ANT may help structure analysis in different way and thus provide us with a fresh view on design processes. Acknowledging Latour's imperative *follow the actors!* has the advantage of allowing for multiple vantage points—it can make it possible to study a situation from many angles rather than from the perspective of just one or a few privileged actors.

ANT is a relatively comprehensive and general approach, and its greatest value—at least to design historians—is as a sort of mental corrective and conceptual backdrop. Still, in his first extensive formulation of ANT, the 1987 book *Science in Action*, Latour proposed a series of “principles” and “rules of method” intended as guidelines for analysis. Some of the most relevant of these deserves mentioning:

Rule 1 We study science *in action* and not ready made science or technology; to do so, we either arrive before the facts and machines are blackboxed or we follow the controversies that reopen them.⁴⁹

Put quite simply, this is for the priority of process over product. Not just the design process as this is conventionally defined, though—but also processes of how meaning and use is formed.

Rule 2 To determine the objectivity or subjectivity of a claim, the efficiency or perfection of a mechanism, we do not look for their *intrinsic* qualities but at all the transformations they undergo *later* in the hands of others.⁵⁰

A satisfactory understanding of a design ideology or a product can not be reached solely by analysing the formulations of the idea or the intentions of the designer and properties of the product—it has to consider how the phenomenon in question is perceived, interpreted and used.

Rule 5 We have to be as *undecided* as the various actors we follow as to what technoscience is made of; every time an inside/outside divide is built, we should study the two sides simultaneously and make the list, no matter how long and heterogeneous, of those who do the work.⁵¹

All prejudice and hindsight should be discarded if we are to have any hope of understanding the actors' attitudes, actions, motives and intentions.

First principle The fate of facts and machines is in later users' hands; their qualities are thus a consequence, not a cause, of a collective action.⁵²

49. Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) p 258

50. *Ibid.*

51. *Ibid.*

The meanings of ideologies and products are not inherent, but are formed through negotiations carried out in networks.

Third principle We are never confronted with science, technology and society, but with a gamut of weaker and stronger *associations*; thus understanding *what* facts and machines are is the same task as understanding *who* the people are.⁵³

The ontological categories of ideologies, artefacts and society are constructions, and not very helpful ones. Any real situation we are faced with is a network involving all these spheres. Objects as well as social groups are products of network-building. Both humans and artefacts can be actants in the network.

Fifth principle Irrationality is always an accusation made by someone building a network over someone else who stands in the way; thus, there is no Great Divide between minds, but only shorter and longer networks.⁵⁴

Any attempt to discredit a design ideology or ridicule/disqualify a product is a strategic action by an actor with a conflicting agenda. Such disputes should thus be seen as conflicts of interest and power struggles between different networks rather than moral questions or intellectual feuds.

These principles and rules of method may make it easier to bring the ANT perspective into empirical studies. ANT should not, however, be thought of as a methodological toolkit, but rather as a theoretical framework facilitating new and dynamic ways of thinking about design.

ANT is both immensely popular as well as highly controversial. The eagerness and magnitude with which it has been applied to ever new case studies and transferred to new fields of study has caused even its “founding fathers” to worry about the development.⁵⁵ John Law has pithily described the phenomenon as “‘Have theory, will travel.’” He argues that what happens to ANT when it is named, described, explained, defined and institutionalized is precisely that same as when a technology is stabilized, conventionalized, and closed—it gets blackboxed, and thus imperative and inoffensive, but at the same time impenetrable and intangible.⁵⁶ What splendid irony! Much by the same token, in a reassessment of his brainchild, Bruno Latour notoriously stated that “there are four things that do not work with actor-network theory; the word actor, the word network, the word theory and the hyphen! Four nails in the coffin!”⁵⁷ One of the major problems, he claimed, was the constellation of the term “actor-network”, because it “would remind sociologists of the agency/structure cliché”.⁵⁸ The whole point of ANT was precisely to bypass such contradictions:

‘Actor’ is not here to play the role of agency and ‘network’ to play the role of society.

52. *Ibid.* p 259

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. One might argue, of course, that this is precisely what I am doing here.

56. John Law, “After ANT: complexity, naming and topology” in John Law and John Hassard (eds.), *Actor Network Theory and After* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) p 8

Actor and network—if we want to still use those terms—designates two faces of the same phenomenon, like waves and particles[.]⁵⁹

Or, as Michel Callon put it; “The actor network is reducible neither to an actor alone nor to a network”.⁶⁰

This is not the place for an exhaustive discussion of neither the merits of nor the problems with ANT. However, one of its most controversial aspects deserves some consideration: the notion of non-human actors.⁶¹ Ford Prefect matter-of-factly stated that, in the situation he and his friend were observing, *the things are also people*. Latour & co. insists not so much that things *are* people, but that the two—non-humans and humans—nevertheless should not be discriminated between. The actors in ANT can be both human as well as non-human. As might well be understood, it is the latter part of this assertion that some find hard to swallow. Probably the most explicit insistence on non-human agency can be found in Bruno Latour’s 1988 article on the sociology of a door-closer. Latour here demonstrates how nonhuman entities become actants through their design: certain tasks have been delegated to them, and performing these tasks (or not performing them, or performing them badly) make the nonhumans actants inhabit the given actor network on a par with human actants. To stick with Latour’s case: this line of thought is what makes the sign put up on a door, informing about a dysfunctional door-closer, far more appropriate than the author (of the sign, not the article) might have intended: “THE GROOM IS ON STRIKE!”⁶²

Many a scholar has had a hard time accepting the way he seeks to give nonhumans a voice.⁶³ The American historian Margaret C. Jacob, for instance, has described Latour’s strategy of letting artefacts “speak” for themselves—referring especially to the ending of Latour’s *Aramis, or The Love of Technology*—as an exercise in “self-indulging

57. Bruno Latour, “On recalling ANT” in Law and Hassard (eds.), *op.cit.* p 15. Latour has later in a quite humorous manner made a U-turn regarding the appropriateness of the term: “I was ready to drop this label [Actor-Network Theory] for more elaborate ones like ‘sociology of translation’, ‘actant-rhizome ontology’, ‘sociology of innovation’, and so on, until someone pointed out to me that the acronym A.N.T. was perfectly fit for a blind, myopic, workaholic, trail-sniffing, and collective traveller. An ant writing for other ants, this fits my project very well!”: Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social—An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p 9

58. Bruno Latour, “On recalling ANT” in Law and Hassard (eds.), *op.cit.* p 16

59. *Ibid.* p 18-19

60. Callon, *op.cit.* p 93

61. General criticism of ANT has been summed up by John Law as follows: ANT “has at different times been criticised for its relative lack of interest in major social asymmetries such as gender, its refusal to base its explanations on generally accepted ontological categories, its tendency to a centred managerialism, the flattening character of its network metaphor, and its lack of concern with Otherness. The extent to which these complaints are appropriate to either early or contemporary work within the tradition is a matter of judgement.”: John Law, *After Method—Mess in Social Science Research* (London: Routledge, 2004) p 157

62. Bruno Latour (under the pseudonym Jim Johnson), “Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer” in *Social Problems*, Vol. 35, No. 3, June 1988, p 298-310

63. One of the most vehement critics of Latour’s work in general is the British psychologist/philosopher/sociologist David Bloor, protagonist of the so-called Edinburgh School of the field known as Sociology of Scientific Knowledge and the *strong programme* approach: David Bloor, “Anti-Latour” in *Studies In History and Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1999, p 81-112. Latour retorted with equal vigour in: Bruno Latour, “For Bloor and Beyond—A Reply to David Bloor’s ‘Anti-Latour’” in *Studies In History and Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1999, p 113-129

pantheism".⁶⁴ This speaks directly to the major problem of non-human agency—that of will or intentionality. An attempt to overcome or sidestep this predicament has been presented by the British psychologists Steven D. Brown and Rose Capdevila, who—concurring that will is a prerequisite for being an agent/actor—have suggested to introduce "a novel way of reading will, one which is entirely devoid of subjective intentions or desires."⁶⁵ I am not really sure if this solves any problems or puts Latour critics at ease, though.

The British sociologist of science Andrew Pickering has proposed a similar way out of ANT's intentionality conundrum. By approaching the relationship between mind and matter, between human and nonhuman actants as a *temporal* and *dialectic* process of negotiation, where both the human and the nonhuman is formed and transformed, it becomes possible to think of nonhumans delegating tasks to humans without attributing the former with intentionality. Both actions and intentions change over time, Pickering argues, and human intentions are intertwined with nonhuman responses.⁶⁶ It is, in short, a dialectic process of mutual resistance and adaptation.

In his recent book *Reassembling the Social*, Latour defines an actor as someone/something which "is made to act by many others... An 'actor'... is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it."⁶⁷ The actions/tasks performed by human actors have often been delegated to them by others, just as actions/tasks performed by nonhuman actors have often been delegated to them by e.g. designers. As I understand it, this is another take on his attempt to dismantle what he sees as an artificial divide between the human and the nonhuman, the "social" and the "technological"/"natural". In other words: the supposed intentional will guiding the actions of human actants is no more evident and unproblematic than in the case of nonhuman actants.

Latour does not present the most scrutinizing analysis of the relation between intentional will and the notion of (nonhuman) actants, but he does, even in his most recent reassessment of ANT confirm his assertion that "objects too have agency".⁶⁸ I suspect that the lack of concern for the aspect of intentional will stems from maintaining that "a machine can be studied no more than a human, because what the analyst is faced with are assemblies of human and nonhuman actants where the competences and performances are distributed."⁶⁹ To Latour it is in fact the very "apparent

64. Margaret C. Jacob, "Science Studies after Social Construction—The Turn toward the Comparative and the Global" in Bonnell and Hunt (eds.), *op.cit.* p 106. Her reference is to: Bruno Latour, *Aramis, or The Love of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996) p 293, and the following passage from Latour's "renarration" of Aramis' (the failed Parisian guided-transportation system) "speech" from beyond the grave: "You loved me provided that I did not exist as a whole... Then people grew frantic on my account. They had meetings about me again. I had to exist as a line... so that the Budget Office would support me."

65. Steven D. Brown and Rose Capdevila, "Perpetuum mobile: substance, force and the sociology of translation" in Law and Hassard (eds.), *op.cit.* p 26-50

66. Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice—Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) p 6-23

67. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social—An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p 46

68. *Ibid.* p 63

69. Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, "A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies" in Bijker and Law, (eds.), *op.cit.* p 259

incommensurability of [objects'] modes of action with traditionally conceived social ties" which make nonhuman actants so important—their actions are intermittent but crucial in understanding social connections: "[T]he continuity of any course of action will rarely consist of human-to-human connections... or of object-object connections, but will probably zigzag from one to the other."⁷⁰ His interest in action is thus focused on studying settings which includes different actants of different kinds. Action is seen as something which takes place in the relations between these different actants, and this view might explain why the quality of intentionality/will seems subordinate to Latour. Because, as he puts it: "the interesting question... is not to decide who is acting... but to decide what is acting and how."⁷¹ The commonsensical notions of intentionality and causality are seen as inhibitions, and Latour maintains that:

any thing that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor—or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant. Thus, the questions to ask about any agent are simply the following: Does it make a difference in the course of some other agent's action or not?... This, of course, does not mean that these participants [the nonhuman actors] 'determine' the action, that baskets 'cause' the fetching of provisions or the hammers 'impose' the hitting of the nail... Rather, it means that there might exist many metaphysical shades between full causality and sheer inexistence. In addition to 'determining' and serving as a 'backdrop for human action', things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on.⁷²

I do not wish to profess the infallibility or universality of these theories in general and Latour's views on nonhuman agency in particular, but I do maintain that many aspects of them may make for new and interesting perspectives on design studies.

In an ANT perspective, then, artefacts may be seen to act in the same way humans do. But, as the Canadian STS scholar Sergio Sismondo has observed, this is due to the externalized perspective of ANT whereby the otherwise notable distinction between *actor* and *actant* is downplayed: "all of the actors of ANT are *actants*, or things made to act." Sismondo concludes that, despite the fervent rhetorics about non-human actors, most ANT studies tend to concentrate on human actors: "Humans appear to have richer repertoires of strategies and goals than do non-humans, and so make more interesting subjects of study."⁷³

Thinking of nonhumans as actants on a par with human actants poses challenges to many forms of design studies, but I find it a fresh and rewarding perspective to keep in mind when analysing design processes, products and their meanings in the writing of a cultural history of design. Historians have often tended to get seduced by the agency of ("great") human actors, losing sight of the other inhabitants—human as well as non-human—of the actor network. How inept such tendencies are in studies of a complex phenomenon such as industrial design has been succinctly remarked by the Czech-Brazilian design critic and philosopher Vilém Flusser:

70. Latour, *op.cit.* p 74-75

71. *Ibid.* p 60

72. *Ibid.* p 71-72

73. Sismondo, *op.cit.* p 72

[I]ndustrial production, including design, has developed into a complex network that makes use of information from various sources. The mass of information available to a producer goes way beyond the capacity of individual memory... Consequently, it has become necessary to act in teams combining human and artificial components; results cannot therefore be attributed to any single author. The design process is organized on an extremely co-operative basis. For this reason, no one person can be held responsible for a product anymore.⁷⁴

This is where the actor-network concept and Latour's insistence on the agency of nonhumans can function as a corrective. The potential of ANT to design history and design studies is, however, largely unexplored. The Finnish economist Mika Pantzar has briefly presented ANT in a design studies context, but there are to my knowledge few who have made anything more of it.⁷⁵ Despite its fascinating approach to central issues such as human-artefact relations ANT is—again; to my knowledge—even less explored by design historians.⁷⁶ The challenge is hereby announced.

It must be remembered, though, that ANT is a general theory, a conceptual framework, and not a methodological toolkit.⁷⁷ Or as John Law puts it, ANT is “better considered as a sensibility to materiality, relationality and process. Whether it is a theory is doubtful.”⁷⁸ There is, however, a more practical-methodological approach that in many ways is based on ANT: an approach conceptualised around the metaphor *script*.

4.4 Script

The designer of the gun had clearly not been instructed to beat about the bush. “Make it evil,” he’d been told. “Make it totally clear that this gun has a right end and a wrong end. Make it totally clear to anyone standing at the wrong end that things are going badly for them. If that means sticking all sorts of spikes and prongs and blackened bits all over it then so be it. This is not a gun for hanging over the fireplace

74. Vilém Flusser, “The Ethics of Industrial Design?” in Vilém Flusser, *The Shape of Things—A Philosophy of Design* (London: Reaktion, 1999) p 67

75. Mika Pantzar, “Domestication of Everyday Life Technology: Dynamic Views on the Social Histories of Artifacts” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1997, p 61-62. In recent architectural research there has been some interest in ANT. See e.g.: Anders Toft, “Generic [modern] Architecture—Field, Actor-Networks and Pragmatism” in *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2004, p 85-95 and Mattias Kärrholm, *Arkitekturens territorialitet—till en diskussion om territoriell makt och gestaltning i stadens offentliga rum* [Doctoral dissertation] (Lund: LTH, Lunds Universitet, 2004)

76. It is interesting to note here that Latour refers to Thomas Hughes’ work, especially his notion of the *seamless web*, and states outright that “There is no difference... between history of technology and ANT, except when the social theory is made explicit”: Latour, *op.cit.* p 81 (n 101). And, as I have argued for a closer relation between the history of technology and design history, there is no reason why ANT should not also be appropriated by design historians. What's good for the goose is good for the gander, one might say. One of the rare examples of a design historical study—although written by a business historian—that does contain reference to ANT, more precisely Latour’s *Reassembling the Social*, is: Per H. Hansen, “Networks, Narratives, and New Markets: The Rise and Decline of Danish Modern Furniture Design, 1930-1970” in *Business History Review*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2006, p 452 (n 13)

or sticking in the umbrella stand, it is a gun for going out and making people miserable with.”⁷⁹

Staring down the barrel of the Kill-O-Zap gun, Douglas Adams’ galactic hitch hiker offers an excellent introduction to understanding what a product’s *script* is.

Whereas Actor-Network Theory probably is best considered a conceptual framework in design history, the affiliated notion of a product script is more of a methodological tool. As discussed above, ANT is concerned i.a. with how artefacts, or nonhumans (as well as human actors), act as mediators, transforming meaning as they form and move through networks. Within this framework, the idea of product script has been developed as an effort to facilitate closer analysis of how products transport and transform meaning. The concept was coined by the French sociologist of technology Madeleine Akrich, and much of its allure stems from the term’s metaphoric character and etymological versatility. It’s latin origin *scriptum*, meaning written, and some of today’s many derived forms such as *scripture* and *film script* should give some hints as to what is meant by a product script.

Akrich uses the term script as a metaphor for the “instruction manual” she claims is inscribed in an artefact. Any artefact contains a “message” (the script) from the producer/designer to the user describing the product’s intended use and meaning. Douglas Adams’ vivid science fiction account of the Kill-O-Zap gun is an exemplary case in point, but the principle applies to more mundane products as well. As Akrich explains in her own, somewhat less sanguine idiom:

Designers thus define actors with specific tastes, competences, motives, aspirations, political prejudices, and the rest, and they assume that morality, technology, science and economy will evolve in particular ways. A large part of the work of innovators is that of “inscribing” this vision of (or prediction about) the world in the technical content of the new object. I will call the end product of this work a “script” or a “scenario”.⁸⁰

77. I repeat this caution because it is one of the principal objections STS scholars seem to make against other disciplines’ interest in STS in general and ANT in particular. For instance, the British sociologist Steve Woolgar has complained that “at the hands of some historians of science STS is construed as a toolbox. It appears to offer a range of methodological techniques and practices. These tools are viewed as being available for use, which is independent of the particular theoretical circumstances of their emergence. An example of this is the ways in which some historical studies claim to ‘deploy actor network theory’ yet seem to pay almost no attention to non human actors in their accounts. The problem is that the construal of STS as a tool box overlooks the fact that the idea of ‘using tools’ is itself theoretically highly loaded. By this I mean that the theoretical import, the provocative edge, goes missing, if STS is thought of merely as a set of tools for tackling (historians’ or others’) predefined problems.”: Steve Woolgar, “What Happened to Provocation in Science and Technology Studies?” in *History and Technology*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2004, p 345

78. Law, *op.cit.* p 157

79. Adams, *op.cit.* p 134

80. Akrich, *op.cit.* p 208. It is interesting to note that another contributor to this publication, the American historian of technology W. Bernard Carlson, made a somewhat similar point—although perhaps with a less terse conjunction between artifact and meaning than Akrich’s script metaphor allows for—when he argued that “inventors invent both artifacts and frames of meanings that guide how they manufacture and market their creations... [I]ndividuals must make assumptions about who will use a technology and the meanings users might assign to it. These assumptions constitute a frame of meaning inventors and entrepreneurs use to guide their efforts at designing, manufacturing, and marketing their technological artifacts.”: W. Bernard Carlson, “Artifacts and Frames of Meaning: Thomas A. Edison, His Managers, and the Cultural Construction of Motion Pictures” in Bijker and Law, (eds.), *op.cit.* p 176-177

I will assert that the inscription of meaning in an artefact is not limited to its “technical content”—which is Akrich’s main interest—but is equally the case regarding its design in general.

In a way, introducing script analysis to design history can be seen as formalizing an already existing mode of thought. For example, the British media scholar Philippa Goodall observed already in 1983 that “design *for* use is design *of* use”—which is a more general way of expressing one of the central tenets of the script concept.⁸¹ Script analysis can thus be a highly valuable tool in the quest for better understanding of how a product’s utilitarian functions, aesthetic expressions, social meanings and cultural identities are constructed. Moreover; the intentionality of designs has been a fascinating but also troublesome and controversial topic for design historians. One of the potential benefits from introducing Akrich’s notion of product script could be as a contribution to a more sound methodological basis for analysis in this field.

In a way, the script concept can be said to reveal design’s empowerment to affect behaviour and meaning. As such, it verifies the maxim that design matters, and can thus be of some comfort to those with a vested interest in design. To others, these mechanisms of influence permeating design through scripts may appear less benign—to some even outright terrifying and dangerous:

[O]ne thing is the democratised household design, that is bad enough, there are great enough dangers in the fucking fact that people eventually acquire such fucking good taste, and become these fucking monsters that display filthy identity through the plagiarist design they buy, that alone is fucking scary enough, if you ask me, the fucking design has become an educator now all of a sudden, and the fucking designer cunts talk about morals and love and humanity, and I don't fucking know what kind of smut they're not talking about, and it naturally leads to what is even worse, and that is that the fucking cunt-heads who are trying to be progressive and say that design has expired its function, that it has finished its role, and that they are interested in non-objects, huh? Huh? Whatthefuck! NON-OBJECTS! Designers have got a fucking mission, now, all of a sudden, it is people's attitudes that matter to them now all of a sudden, huh, the progressive designer pricks are suddenly supposed to design people's attitudes and people's love for the surrounding world, huh? Now it is suddenly time to discard with the educational objects and fucking fifty years too late start talking about ideas and conceptual tasks, fuck, it is so fucking terrifying that I almost start shivering, look Casco, I'm fucking shivering, I'm afraid, that's what I am, I'm fucking afraid of the day when a fucking designer-worldview comes along and creeps into my body, I'm fucking terrified of that, I'm going to kill myself and my family the day the ideas of fucking fag architects and designers creep under my skin and into my fucking circulatory system, so that I begin to destroy my family with evil taste and fucking design, that is fucking scary, look, I'm shivering, it is fucking scary when the decadent ultra-formalistic fucking ideas of designers and architects begin to spread and sneak out into the public sphere and into people's houses, just like the fucking coffee jug design and the fucking evil fruit dish have, and turn everyone into filthy decadent fucking designerheads, that is too fucking much, it is too fucking dangerous that all should end up with fucking formalistic ideas and fucking formalistic attitudes, I see it happening, everyone has suddenly become so fucking conscious, and everyone is so fucking sure of

81. Philippa Goodall, “Design and Gender” in *Block*, No. 9, 1983, p 58

their own taste, imagine it, it is fucking hell on earth the day everyone is walking around being design- or fucking architect kings in their rotten hearts, I see it happening, I see it, it is the most fucking dangerous tendency ever, that everybody suddenly—via that cunt-pompous and cunt-good design—is supposed to be so fucking conscious and self-conscious and self-critical and autonomous and attentive and consumption-sceptical and culture industry-sceptical and mass value-sceptical and innovation-sceptical and design-sceptical and zen-like and controversial and home-rebellious, and at the same time, at the same fucking time—via the condescending fucking highbrow fucking faux-self-constituted art-design—everybody is supposed to be so fucking consumption-friendly and non-snobbish-snobbish and cultural industry-indulgent and consumption-indulgent and porn-liberal and amoral and beyond this and that and genre breaking and non-ironic and non-political-political and non-dandy-dandyistic and non-boboistic and so on, and you can go on listing all the fucking positions people are forced into because of the mentality- and behaviour-forming and mentality- and behaviour-expanding fucking design-attitude that it has stolen from the dreary fucking architecture-attitude that it again has stolen from the fucking art-attitude that supposedly originally was intended to mirror and problematize the psycho-world in which it was embedded, but which end up, eventually, with higher and higher rotation speed, on the coffee table of the fucking psycho-head that it originally was supposed to criticise, because the psycho-head all of a sudden has gotten progressionart-like self-critical attitude shoved into his fucking brain via the fucking design, which again sits there thinking it has done a good deed by circulating the in the first place futile criticism, three hundred and sixty fucking degrees and pumped it back into the world as the worst imaginable decadent surplus-nazi mindset the world has ever seen, in the worst possible way design pumps, blind as a bat to what kind of material it deals with, everything it comes by of outdated artistic positions back into the world's fucking asshole with a gigantic OSCAR MIETWOHN-designed enema.⁸²

This rampant *rage against the (design) machine* poured out by one of the shady characters in Matias Faldbakken's dystopian project on Scandinavian misanthropy is hardly representative of the common consumer. Nevertheless, if we are able to look beyond the obscenities, which incidentally must be said to constitute a prime example of what Tom Wolfe has dubbed "Fuck Patois",⁸³ this passage effectively illustrates that the construction of meanings of design and design ideology is not necessarily a smooth operation. No matter how well-intended the designers' inscriptions and programs are, more or less convincing anti-programs are likely to be formed.

The materialization of the designer's more or less informed presumptions/visions/predictions about the relations between the artefact and the human actors surrounding it thus becomes an effort at ordaining the users' understanding of the product's use and meaning. However, there is always the chance that the actors decide not to play the role ascribed to them by the designers, and also that the users misunderstand, ignore, discard or reject the "instruction manual" and define their roles and the product's use and meaning at odds with the producer's/designer's intentions as conveyed through the script. The script is thus a key to understanding how producers/designers, products and users negotiate and construct a sphere of action and meaning.

It is precisely this attention to what goes on between the sphere of production and the sphere of consumption and use that is so intriguing and promising about script analysis. As discussed earlier, the tendency to focus either on the sphere of production or the

sphere of consumption has been criticized both in the history of technology and design history, and requests have been made for approaches that can bridge the two. Bruno Latour has provided a nice image of the insufficiency of studying only one sphere: “Looking at the mechanism alone is like watching half the court during a tennis game; it appears as so many meaningless moves.”⁸⁴ To avoid such a less than satisfactory situation, we should seek to constantly move between designer and user, between the designer’s imagined user and the real user (as well as represented users),⁸⁵ between intention and interpretation, between what is written into an artifact (inscription) and how it is read (subscription/de-inscription).⁸⁶ In short; mediation and translation should

82. Matias Faldbakken (under the pseudonym Abo Rasul), *The Cocka Hola Company—Skandinavisk misantropi* (Oslo: Cappelen, 2001) p 292-295 (“en ting er at den demokratiserte husholdningsdesignen, den er ille nok, det ligger farer store nok i det hælvetes faktum at folk skal få så jævla god smak etter hvert, og bli såne jævla monstre som viser svinaktig identitet via plagiatdesignen de kjøper seg, bare dét er griseskummelt nok, spør du meg, den jævla designen har liksom blitt en oppdrager nå plutselig, og de jævla fittedesignerne snakker om moral og kjærlighet og menneskelighet, og jeg vet da faen hva slags griseri de ikke snakker om, og det fører naturlig nok til det som er enda verre, og det er at de jævla fittehuene som prøver å være progressive og si at designen har brukt opp funksjonen sin, at den har spilt ut rollen sin, og at de er interessert i ikke-objekter, hæ? Hæ? Fyfaen! IKKE-OBJEKTER! Designerne har fått en jævla misjon nå, plutselig, det er folks holdninger som betyr noe for dem nå plutselig, hæ, de progressive kølledesignerne skal plutselig designe folks holdninger og folks kjærlighet til omverden, hæ? Nå er det plutselig på tide å kaste fra seg de oppdragende objektene og faen hakkemeg femti år for sent begynne å snakke om idéer og konseptuelle oppgaver, fyfaen, det er så jævlig skummelt at jeg nesten begynner å skjelve, se Casco, jeg skjelver faenmeg, jeg er redd, det er det jeg er, jeg er faenmeg redd for den dagen når en jævla designeroppfatning av verden kommer og sniker seg inn i kroppen min, det er jeg faenmeg livredd for, jeg kommer til å ta livet av meg og familien min den dagen idéene til jævla homoarkitekter og designere lur seg inn under huden min og inn i det jævla blodsystemet mitt, slik at jeg begynner å ødelegge familien min med ond smak og forpult design, det er faenmeg skummelt, se, jeg skjelver, det er faenmeg skummelt når de dekadente urformalistiske jævla idéene til designere og arkitekter skal begynne å spre seg og snike seg ut i offentligheten og inn i husene til folk, akkurat som den jævla kaffekannedesignen og det jævla hælvetes onde fruktfatet har gjort, og gjøre alle til skitne dekadente jævla designerhuer, det er faenmeg for drøyt, det er faenmeg for farlig at alle skal ende opp med hælvetes formalistidéer og hælvetes formalistholdninger, jeg ser at det skjer, plutselig har alle blitt så hælvetes jævla bevisste, og alle går rundt og er så jævla sikker på sin egen smak, tenk dere, det er faenmeg hælvetete på jord den dagen alle går rundt og er design- eller jævla arkitektkonger i de råtnete hjertene sine, jeg ser det skje, jeg ser det, det er faenmeg den skumleste tendensen noensinne, at alle plutselig—via den fittehovne, og fittegode designen—skal bli så jævla bevisste og selvbevisste og selvkritiske og autonome og oppmerksomme og konsumskeptiske og kulturindustrikskeptiske og masseverdiskeptiske og innovasjonsskeptiske og designskeptiske og zen-aktige og kontroversielle og hjemmeopprørske, og på samme tid, på samme jævla tid—via den overbærende hælvetes høybrynte jævla liksom-selvkonstituerte kunstdesignen—skal alle være så jævla konsumpositive og ikke-snobbetesnobbetes og kulturindustrioverbærende og konsumoverbærende og pornoliberal og amoralsk og hinsides ditt og datt og sjangeroverskridende og ikke-ironiske og ikke-politisk-politisk og ikke-dandy-dandyistisk og ikke-boboistisk og så videre, og du kan holde på med å ramse opp alle jævla posisjoner som folk tvinges inn i på grunn av den mentalitets- og holdningsskapende og mentalitets- og holdningsekspanderende jævla designinnstillingen som den har grisestjålet fra den kjipe jævla arkitektinnstillingen som den igjen har grisestjålet fra den hælvetes jævla kunstholdningen som liksom i utgangspunktet skulle speile og problematisere den psyko-verdenen den sto midt oppe i, men som ender opp, til syvende og sist, med raskere og raskere omløpshastighet, på stuebordet til det jævla psyko-huet som den i utgangspunktet skulle kritisere, fordi psyko-huet plutselig har fått progresjonskunst-aktig selvkritisk holdning stappet inn i den forpulte jævla hjernen sin via den hælvetes jævla designen, som igjen sitter der og tror den har gjort en god gjerning ved å ha sirkulert den i utgangspunktet dødfødte kritikken, tre hundre og seksti jævla grader og pumpet den inn i verden igjen som den verst tenkelige dekadente overskuddsnazistiske tenkemåten verden noensinne har sett, på den verst tenkelige måten pumper designen, stakk blind for hvilket materiale den befatter seg med, alt den kommer over av utdaterte kunstneriske posisjoner tilbake igjen i verdens jævla rasshøl med et gedigent OSCAR MIETWOHN-designet klystér.”)

be core concerns, and script analysis can be an appropriate methodological tool in such an approach.

As already mentioned, the concept is based on a series of metaphoric, analogic and etymological modifications of the *script* theme. The relations to semiotics soon become clear, and because semiotics due to its embedment in linguistics has been accused of reducing everything to text and thus being ill equipped to deal with materiality,⁸⁷ Akrich and Latour declare that “semiotics is not limited to signs; the key aspect of the semiotics of machines is its ability to move from signs to things and back.”⁸⁸ Providing a guide to our understanding of this system, Akrich and Latour have come up with a vocabulary that explains various connoted terms and how they fit in a script analysis. Some of its most central terms merit a presentation:

Script, description, inscription, or transcription: The aim of the academic written analysis of a setting is to put on paper the text of what the various actors in the settings are doing to one another; the de-scription, usually by the analyst, is the opposite movement of the in-scription by the engineer, inventor, manufacturer, or designer...

Prescription; proscription; affordances, allowances: What a device allows or forbids from the actors—humans and nonhuman—that it anticipates; it is the morality of a setting both negative (what it prescribes) and positive (what it permits).

Subscription or the opposite, de-inscription: The reaction of the anticipated actants—human and nonhumans—to what is prescribed or proscribed to them; according to their own antiprograms they either underwrite it or try to extract themselves out of it or adjust their behavior or the setting through some negotiations...

Re-inscription: The same thing as inscription but seen as a movement, as a feedback mechanism; it is the redistribution of all the other variables in order for a setting to cope with the contradictory demands of many antiprograms.⁸⁹

By thinking along the lines suggested here, we are given a tool that connects some of the many and disparate aspects of the complex field of study design history is. Introducing such a common methodological vocabulary might also make it easier to locate and analyse the intricate relations that make up *the seamless web of sociodesign*.⁹⁰

83. Tom Wolfe, *I am Charlotte Simmons* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2004) p 38

84. Bruno Latour, “Where Are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artefacts” in Bijker and Law, (eds.), *op.cit.* p 247

85. Johan Schot and Adri Albert de la Bruheze, “The Mediated Design of Products, Consumption, and Consumers in the Twentieth Century” in Nelly Oudshoorn and Trevor Pinch (eds.), *How Users Matter—The Co-Construction of Users and Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003) p 235 and Madeleine Akrich, “User Representations: Practices, Methods and Sociology” in Arie Rip, Thomas J. Misa and Johan Schot (eds.), *Managing Technology in Society. The Approach of Constructive Technology Assessment* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995) p 167-184

86. Madeleine Akrich, “The De-scription of Technological Objects” in Bijker and Law, (eds.), *op.cit.* p 208

87. For instance, the American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and sociologist Eugene Rochberg-Halton have asserted that “most accounts of how things signify tend to ignore the active contribution of the thing itself to the meaning process.”: Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things—Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) p 43

88. Akrich and Latour, *op.cit.* p 259

89. *Ibid.* p 259-262

90. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law, “What Next? Technology, Theory, and Method” in Bijker and Law, (eds.), *op.cit.* p 202

A feature of the script concept that is not discussed in Akrich and Latour's vocabulary but that may clarify its value in design history is the suggested distinction between a *physical script* and a *socio-technical script*.⁹¹ The physical script is embedded in the artefact's physical form and consists of those properties of the product's physical form and interface that (try to) tell the user about its intended use. It is this (not always particularly successful) phenomenon, understood as intrinsic constraints and affordances that the American computer scientist and psychologist Donald A. Norman discusses in his 1998 book *The Design of Everyday Things*.⁹² Although Norman in a more recent book takes on the emotional aspects of design,⁹³ he is here concerned virtually exclusively with products' utilitarian functions. He can thus be said to be in line with the notion of a physical script, but does not relate to the idea of a socio-technical script. The same can to a large extent also be said about the British sociologist Ian Hutchby who has discussed the concept of affordances as a "remedy" for the relativism he finds in a radical social constitutionalist view on the nature of technology and artefacts. And like Norman, Hutchby has borrowed the concept of affordances from the American psychologist James J. Gibson.⁹⁴ In addition to Norman, the British design theoretician Tom H. Fisher has explored the potential of Gibsonian affordances to design studies. Seen in light of Akrich's idea of the script, Fisher makes the important observation that "affordances cannot simply be 'built into' or 'read out of' artifacts, but are discovered by users through interaction with them."⁹⁵ Still, although he claims that "[o]ur exploration of the affordances of the material world resolves the objective and cultural aspects of our relationship to materials",⁹⁶ Fisher's take on affordances is profoundly linked to the physical object and its (perceived) material properties, and is thus less dynamic and versatile than Akrich's notion of the (physical and socio-technical) script.

The socio-technical script has more to do with the transportation and transformation of a product's symbolic, emotional, social and cultural meanings. Partly, to varying degrees, this is also related to the artefact's physical, formal, aesthetic qualities, but the socio-technical script includes much more than the artefact itself. It involves all kinds of communication that surrounds and accompanies the product, such as the manufacturer's image, brand identity, market position, product reputation, user feedback, subcultural appropriation of the product, and—probably the most explicit expression of the socio-technical script—marketing, advertisement and general media coverage.

It is important, however, that this distinction between, or specification, is not misread as a simplistic dualism. That would make the concept fall prey to the same kind of criticism the American design historian Barry M. Katz has waged against the Dutch philosopher of technology Peter-Paul Verbeek's discernment between a product's "material utility" and its "social-cultural utility". Katz discredits this as "the old

91. Marit Hubak, "The Car as a Cultural Statement" in Merete Lie and Knut H. Sørensen (eds.), *Making Technology Our Own?—Domesticating Technology into Everyday Life* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996) p 175

92. Donald A. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998) See esp. p 81-104

93. Donald A. Norman, *Emotional Design—Why we love (or hate) everyday things* (New York: Basic Books, 2004)

94. Ian Hutchby, "Technologies, Texts and Affordances" in *Sociology*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2001, p 441-456

95. Tom H. Fisher, "What We Touch, Touches Us: Materials, Affects, and Affordances" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2004, p 26

96. *Ibid.* p 31

dichotomy between *engineered function* and *designed meaning*”, rightly reminding us that “[t]echnology, too, is laden with referential signification, just as it is unwise to presume that aesthetic categories have no function.”⁹⁷ This vital clarification recalls the observation by the American psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and sociologist Eugene Rochberg-Halton that “it is extremely difficult to disentangle the use-related function from the symbolic meanings in even the most practical objects.”⁹⁸ This entanglement of the symbolic and the utilitarian is surely reciprocal, making their assertion equally valid vice versa; the symbolic meanings can not be disentangled from the use-related functions either. Akrich is acutely aware of the problems caused by the momentum of etymological and ontological conventions, and stresses that “the links that concern us are necessarily *both* technical and social”.⁹⁹ Thus the distinction between physical script and socio-technical script should not be understood as a conceptual dichotomy, but as one possible—and often rewarding—way of nuancing our conception of how things act, communicate, and transform meaning. In real life—and hence in empirical case studies—the physical script and the socio-technical script will be entangled and reciprocal.

The Norwegian sociologist Marit Hubak has made use of script analysis in her study of how the identities of certain car makes and models were sought constructed and conveyed through newspaper advertisements. She defines the socio-technical script as

*ideas about or views of users and attitudes and values connected to cars and motoring. Thus marketing is part of the socio-technical script, which is built on the physical script.*¹⁰⁰

According to Hubak, marketing contains both types of communication, of which one is direct and one indirect. The physical script is seeking to exercise direct influence over users, as it is promoting the product’s physical properties and utilitarian function. The socio-technical script, on the other hand, is seeking to exercise influence by way of indirect attraction. This attraction can be more or less related to utilitarian, symbolic and emotional arguments.¹⁰¹

Although advertisement and marketing are important components in an artefact’s socio-technical script, it should be stressed that these aspects do not *amount to* the socio-technical script. Our world abounds with products that are no longer manufactured or marketed. Of course, no one knows this better than design historians, as it is normally amongst this inexhaustible motley crew of material culture that we find those artefacts making up our subject matter and sources. These products nevertheless have socio-technical scripts, although they are likely to have changed since first inscribed by manufacturers, designers and marketers. Sticking to cars, a case in point might be the Citroën 2CV launched in 1948. Designed by Pierre Boulanger, Henri Lefèvre, Flaminio

97. Katz, *op.cit.* p 388. His reference is to: Peter-Paul Verbeek, *What Things Do—Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005)

98. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *op.cit.* p 20-21

99. Akrich, *op.cit.* p 206

100. Hubak, *op.cit.* p 175

101. *Ibid.* p 175-176

Bertoni and Jean Muraret from the late 1930s, this highly unconventional and very popular little car remained in production until 1990. The 2CV was intended as a people's car, with the notorious design specifications demanding it be "capable of transporting four people, or two farmers with... a bag of potatoes... across a ploughed field, without breaking the eggs they carried with them in a basket."¹⁰² Looking at advertisements from the 1960s and 1970s the farmer is absent, but the socio-technical script is still geared towards the conventional car consumer, represented e.g. by the happy nuclear family on a camping trip. In stark contrast to these inscriptions by manufacturers, designers and marketers, the Citroën 2CV became, as we all know, a paramount icon of just about everything opposed to mainstream car culture.

This effectively demonstrates the many elements of uncertainty pertaining to the process of inscription as well as the power of the users. In the case of the 2CV, it was the users (both actual and represented users) and their constellations of subcultures who transformed the socio-technical script over time. Manufacturers, designers and marketers can react to such subcultural transformation of meaning in different ways. The British cultural historian Peter Stanfield has shown how Harley-Davidson has appropriated the historic use—real, represented and fictitious—of its motorcycles in the product development: "Harley-Davidson... has literally *inscribed* the past within the design of its machines" [my italics].¹⁰³

As owner, user or consumer you contribute to the proliferation and publicity of the product and participate in the formation and transformation of its meaning and identity. It follows that a product should not be regarded as finished when it leaves the factory and is introduced into the market. As Latour put it: "The fate of facts and machines is in later users' hands".¹⁰⁴ This is where script analysis can help bridge the gap between the sphere of production and the sphere of consumption: by moving from studying how scripts are constructed and promoted by manufacturers, designers and marketers (inscribed) to how they are read and interpreted by users. Those reading a script can choose to—completely or partially—accept (subscribe) or reject (de-inscribe) it. Or, in cases of "illiteracy" (or poorly written scripts), the script might be misunderstood or even not detected. As described in the opening quote by Douglas Adams, Ford Prefect most decidedly both understood and subscribed to the menace inscribed in the Kill-O-Zap gun by its designer.

Users thus form their own interpretations of scripts. But as long as the ways in and circumstances under which the product is used and the meanings formed by/around/through it do not differ too much from those envisioned by the manufacturer/designer/marketer, the script analysis will be an important instrument in understanding the interaction between product and user.¹⁰⁵ The concept is particularly enticing because it

102. Penny Sparke, *A Century of Car Design* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2002) p 102-105

103. Peter Stanfield, "Heritage Design: The Harley-Davidson Motor Company" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1992 p 154. Despite the wording, and because Stanfield's article was published about the same time as Akrich's first publications on the script concept, he make no reference to her work. However, he is clearly thinking along the same lines.

104. Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) p 259

105. Akrich, *op.cit.* p 216

brings the artefacts we study alive, and does so irrespective of whether we approach them from the sphere of production or the sphere of consumption/use. By allowing us to trace the transformations through the object as it moves between different actors and arenas, it can also help undermine the “Great Wall” that seems to have been erected between the two spheres.¹⁰⁶

4.5 Domestication

I honestly thought the satellite town would inspire a varied and exciting garden life, says Magnus... The problem is that people in Rykkinn are not interested in fruit and plants. They are seemingly only interested in lawn. There is a fundamental difference between people who are interested in fruit and plants and those who are only interested in lawn. In the beginning I believed that the Rykkinn dwellers, who surely have been allotted ample space to cultivate any plants, would show a certain amount of fantasy regarding the use of these flower boxes and gardens. But all along I see the same. Everywhere in Rykkinn there is: crocus and lawn.¹⁰⁷

Disillusion looms large in Nikolaj Frobenius’ novel *Teori og praksis* about the paradise lost of the 1970s satellite town Rykkinn, outside Oslo. The gardening enthusiast and cultural radical Magnus, the protagonist’s father, is one of the architects who designed the project. In their appropriation of their new domiciles, his neighbours seem to be struck by what Douglas Coupland has called “Option paralysis: The tendency, when given unlimited choices, to make none.”¹⁰⁸ However, through their “failure” (according to Magnus) to properly domesticate their gardens, his fellow Rykkinn dwellers are, in fact, domesticating the architect’s ideology by transforming visions of a colourful commune into variations of a conform community.

Both ANT and script analysis aim at moving back and forth between the sphere of production and the sphere of consumption/use in order to understand the co-production of meaning. Still, at least in historical studies, much due to pragmatic limitations in resources and research methods as well as the availability of empirical evidence, users

106. A useful and inspiring survey of more general strategies for historians aiming at tearing down the wall or bridging the gap between the spheres of production and consumption can be found in: Sally Clarke, “Consumer Negotiations” in *Business and Economic History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1997, p 101-122

107. Nikolaj Frobenius, *Teori og praksis* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2004) p 64-65 (“Ærlig talt trodde jeg drabantbyen skulle inspirere til et mangslungent og spennende hageliv, sier Magnus... Feilen er at folk på Rykkinn ikke interesserer seg for frukt og planter. De interesserer seg visst utelukkende for plen. Det er en grunnleggende forskjell på folk som interesserer seg for frukt og planter og de som bare interesserer seg for plen. Til å begynne med trodde jeg at beboerne på Rykkinn, som vitterlig hadde fått tildelt rikelig areal til å dyrke alle mulige slags vekster, ville utvise en viss fanasi med hensyn til hvordan de brukte disse blomsterkassene og hagene. Men hele tiden ser jeg altså det samme. Overalt på Rykkinn er det: krokus of plen.”)

108. Douglas Coupland, *Generation X* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991) p 139

often remain *projected* users or *represented* users. The American historian of technology Carroll Pursell wrote of his own field that it has prioritized "design over use, production over consumption".¹⁰⁹ It is no longer controversial to advocate a shift of focus, but that does not mean it is easy to implement. The social sciences have been at the forefront of consumption studies, and might be a valuable source of inspiration. To historians, however, studying use and consumption poses many methodological challenges rendering direct methodology transfer difficult.

Traditionally, consumption has been regarded as a passive function where the consumer/user conforms and adapts to directives issued by producer/designer, caught in the web of materialism under the spell of capitalist society. This simplistic moralism has been challenged at least from the 1970s onward, when e.g. the French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Baudrillard argued that consumption could be seen as symbolic and creative acts.¹¹⁰ Later positions include e.g. the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's notion of an aesthetic consumption and the British anthropologist Daniel Miller's conception of consumption as identity formation.¹¹¹ Common to all these otherwise different outlooks is that they attribute both greater competencies as well as responsibilities to the consumer/user. Consumers/users play active roles in forming their lives through creative manipulation of objects, meanings, and social systems according to their needs, desires, and abilities. In our daily lives we use products by integrating and consuming them. At the same time, we are consumed by the products as we respond to them and engage with their properties, functions and forms. This reciprocal relationship between people and things is what the British sociologist Roger Silverstone *et al.* characterize as the result of a process of *domestication*.¹¹²

The metaphoric term domestication is used to describe how we "tame" the technology and artefacts that surround us. An essential point, though, is that the taming process is characterized by *mutual* change and adaptation. As the Norwegian sociologist Knut H. Sørensen puts it: "Domestication... has wider implications than a socialization of technology: it is a *co-production* of the social and the technical" (my italics).¹¹³ This is what makes domestication such an apt metaphor, because, as Silverstone straightforwardly asks: "Wild animals then, wild technologies now: what's the difference?" The point is, though, that "[d]omestication... leaves nothing as it is."¹¹⁴

109. Carroll Pursell: "Seeing the Invisible: New Perspectives in the History of Technology." *ICON*, Vol. 1, 1995, p 9

110. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* [1979] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996), Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* [1970] (London: Sage, 1998) and Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* [1972] (St. Louis, Mont.: Telos, 1981)

111. Zygmunt Bauman, "Broken Lives—Broken Strategies" in Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995) p 72-104, Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) and Daniel Miller, "The Myths of Consumption" in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Acknowledging Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1995) p 20-35

112. Roger Silverstone, Eric Hirsch and David Morley, "Information and Communication Technologies and the Moral Economy of the Household" in Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (eds.), *Consuming Technologies. Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*. (London: Routledge, 1992) p 15-31. For survey and critical discussion of the concept, see: Thomas Berker, Maren Hartmann, Yves Punie and Katie J. Ward (eds.), *Domestication of Media and Technology* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006)

113. Knut H. Sørensen, "Domestication: the enactment of technology" in Berker, Hartmann, Punie and Ward (eds.), *op.cit.* p 46

Even the most common animal domestication processes, such as housetraining a docile puppy, is a question of give and take. Yes, the dog is coaxed or scared into adapting to the owner's rules of conduct, but the owner also has to adapt to the dog's requirements for exercise and nutrition. Much the same can be said of the relation between products/technologies and their consumers/users. As users we modify the artifacts so that they suit our needs and desires in the best possible way (both utilitarian, emotional and symbolic), but at the same time, we, our behaviour, feelings, and attitudes are transformed by the products. Artifacts are adapted to patterns of use, but they also create new patterns of use. Such transformations take place in the emotional and symbolic domains as well. Symbolic codes of various kinds are converted into something personal and associated with questions of identity, emotions and social relations. Domestication is the utilitarian and emotional adaptation to and appropriation of artifacts. Through the process you adapt to and appropriate the artifact, and make it meaningful to your life. When the product's meaning has been negotiated, constructed and stabilized, it can function as a personal expression for the user.¹¹⁵

Domestication is a multi-dimensional process of negotiation that involves both human and non-human actants, and that is characterized by conflict as well as collaboration. Abstract space is transformed into concrete place, the house turns into a home, objects become symbols, identity is formed and transformed, and social relations are reproduced or destroyed. Users have their stories that differ both in extension and content. Their experiences represent a repertoire of domestication strategies and a catalogue of actions that can be implemented. Domestication is thus neither a harmonious nor a linear process—it is normally conflict-ridden and dynamic. The concept does thus not imply a stable consolidation of an artifact's meaning and use. Firstly because one and the same object can be domesticated differently by different users in different societies and cultures. Secondly, what might seem to be a stabilization of an artifact's meaning and the closure of negotiations as its use becomes routine may suddenly be disrupted. Needs and desires might change, external symbolic codes might be internalized, or new users might be enrolled. Such situations can lead to a redomestication of the artifact.¹¹⁶ A typical example could be a student inheriting a chair from her grandparents. As the artifact is transferred from its seemingly stable situation by the fireplace in an old farm house to a city studio apartment, from being grandma's crossword puzzle retreat to the student's bedside clothes depot, the chair and its users are tossed into a new round of negotiations, a new process of domestication.

Using the concept of domestication as a prism can provide new insight into what the consumption and use mean. An artifact is never introduced in a socio-cultural vacuum. There is no *ding-an-sich*, no ideal, objective object that enters the sphere of consumption and use as a sort of *tabula rasa*. There are only complex socio-technical situations/

114. Roger Silverstone, "Domesticating domestication. Reflections on the life of a concept" in Berker, Hartmann, Punie and Ward (eds.), *op.cit.* p 231

115. Merete Lie and Knut H. Sørensen, "Making Technology Our Own?" in Lie and Sørensen (eds.), *op.cit.* p 8-17

116. Knut H. Sørensen, *Technology in Use. Two Essays on the Domestication of Artefacts* [STS Working Paper 2/94] (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 1994) p 6-7

settings/entities that contain scripts that are both physical and socio-cultural, or *ding-an-mich/dich/uns/euch*, as it were.

The concept of domestication can be seen as complementing Akrich's script metaphor. This combination could have great potential for design history in analysing the relation between intention and understanding in the design and use of products. This is precisely in line with Sørensen's recommendation "to study domestication as a negotiated space of designers' views and users' needs and interests."¹¹⁷ Is the artifact being understood and used as intended and inscribed? What is it about the script that ensures this? And what happens if the domestication process takes an unforeseen direction, in other words: when users do not subscribe? In most cases, though, some kind of intermediate position arise, where parts of the script is subscribed to and other parts rejected or misunderstood (de-inscribed), and a process of negotiation commences where both product and user are adapted and transformed until a satisfactory degree of domestication is achieved.

An intriguing illustration of a most mundane example of this phenomenon can be found in a passage from the American writer Nicholson Baker's little novel *The Mezzanine*—a tribute to the hoards of unsung innovations in commonplace design and technology that tend to elude everyday consciousness but nonetheless profoundly affect our lives. The book's protagonist ponders why the toilet seats in his office bathroom are horseshoe-shaped as opposed to the complete ovals of those found in his and most other home bathrooms:

I suppose the gap lessens the problems of low-energy drops of urine falling on the seat when some scofflaw thoughtlessly goes standing up without first lifting the seat. There may be several other reasons for the horseshoe shape, having to do with accessibility, I'm not sure. But I am pleased that someone gave this subject thought, adopting what his company manufactured to deal with the realities of human behavior.¹¹⁸

What he in fact is suggesting here, is how the horseshoe-shaped toilet seats in corporate bathrooms are the result of a redesign informed by the non-compliance (de-inscription) with some of the basic properties of the original, complete oval design by its users (or rather, a group of lazy/indifferent/inconsiderate users). And like Baker's protagonist, I take pleasure in the fact that someone has at least made an effort to respond to this most unpleasant instance of users' domestication of an artefact by redesigning it factoring in undesired as well as desired use. Whether or not it has solved the problem or even can be considered a good attempt at doing so, is another question.

In keeping with the Citroën 2CV example above, the domestication of two other highly popular "people's cars" of the postwar era neatly illustrate how use and users matter; how the domestication of a product can be fed back into design and product development. The archetype of the "people's car" is of course the Volkswagen *Type 1*,

117. Knut H. Sørensen, "Domestication: the enactment of technology" in Berker, Hartmann, Punie and Ward (eds.), *op.cit.* p 46

118. Nicholson Baker, *The Mezzanine* [1988] (London: Granta, 1998) p 74. For a brief account of how this particular work of fiction might stimulate design historians, see: Jeffrey L. Meikle, "Material Virtues: On the Ideal and the Real in Design History" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998, p 197-199

a.k.a. the *Beetle* from 1938/1946, designed by Ferdinand Porsche and Erwin Komenda. The huge success of this product led other car manufacturers to develop equivalent concepts. Among the more successful were the Fiat *600* and *500* from 1955 and 1957, designed by Dante Giacosa, and the BMC *Mini* from 1959 designed by Alec Issigonis. Both the *Beetle* and the *Mini* were originally developed as quintessential economic and pragmatic “people’s cars”. These scripts were, at least initially, largely subscribed, but both cars underwent quite drastic domestication processes later in their long production lives in which the products took on new meanings and identities—e.g. *Beetle* the hippie car and *Mini* the rally car.¹¹⁹ Various aspects of these negotiated understandings, that differed quite radically from the original scripts, were then fed back as re-inscriptions into the design of the 1998 VW *New Beetle* designed by J Mays and Freeman Thomas and the 2001 BMW *New Mini* designed by Frank Stephenson. Of course, these new cars had little or nothing in common with the originals, except for stylistic resemblances. They aspired to be trend icons, not “people’s cars”.¹²⁰ In short; the varying subscriptions and de-inscriptions of product scripts—their domestication—can result in re-inscription in new designs. We have thus come full circle.

Like in the case of script analysis, traces of the basic principles of the concept of domestication can be found in earlier design history literature. This is not to say that domestication brings nothing new to the table, only that design historians have long been aware of the fact that the meanings and forms of products are transformed through use. A early example, albeit from architecture, is the French architectural historian Philippe Boudon’s 1972 study of how the inhabitants of Le Corbusier’s row houses at Pessac near Bordeaux built in the 1920s radically transformed their homes.¹²¹ As the British design historian John A. Walker wrote in 1989 when introducing Boudon’s book: “[T]he issue is not only what design does to people, but what people do with design.”¹²²

Another good example can be found in a 1981 article by the Australian design historian Tony Fry:

[V]arious sub-cultures have appropriated the motorbike in order to convert it to an icon of antagonism towards the dominant culture. In technical and visual modification they have redesigned the appearance of the machines to alter their meaning in order to construct significations of opposition amongst an ensemble of such significations.¹²³

119. For an account of the multi-faceted domestications or cultural appropriations of the VW *Beetle*, see: Phil Patton, *Bug—The Strange Mutations of the World’s Most Famous Automobile* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003)

120. J Mays is now vice-president of design for the Ford Motor Company and is responsible for other “re-launched” cars in addition to the VW *New Beetle*, such as the 2002 Ford *Thunderbird* and the 2005 Ford *Mustang*—both of which draw heavily on the design of their 1950s and 1960s namesakes. This design trend was dubbed “Retrofuturism” and linked explicitly to Mays’ name in the occasion of an exhibition of his work at the Geffen Contemporary of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in November 2002: Brooke Hodge and C. Edson Armi, *Retrofuturism—The Car Design of J Mays* (New York: Universe, 2002). However catchy this label might be, though, Mays have been involved in many car designs that do not fit the bill, such as e.g. the 1983 Audi *100*, the 1983 VW *Golf*, and the 1989 BMW *8 series*.

121. Philippe Boudon, *Lived-In Architecture—Le Corbusier’s Pessac Revisited* (London: Lund Humphries, 1972)

122. John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989) p 183

123. Tony Fry, “Design History: A Debate?” in *Block* No. 5, 1981, p 17

Fry's passage requires two comments: First; his example involves a very particular kind of users and a very physical transformation of the products in question—but there is nothing to indicate that the principle should not apply also to more mainstream users of more mundane products and transformation less dependent on mechanical knowledge and tool equipment. Second: he does not use the term domestication, but writes about a process of appropriation involving conversion, modification, alteration and construction. As it happens, “appropriation” and “conversion” are the first and last—enclosing “objectification” and “incorporation”—of the four stages Silverstone *et al.* identified in the process of domestication.¹²⁴

Although the ideas behind the concept of domestication thus clearly should appeal to design historians, I have in its literature only come across one explicit reference to the article in which Silverstone *et al.* coined it. In an article on the cultural transformations of the iconic *Super-elliptical table* designed by Piet Hein and Bruno Mathsson and manufactured by Fritz Hansen from 1968, the Danish anthropologist Gertrud Øllgaard stated that:

Processes of appropriation have been studied in recent analyses of practices of consumption which stress how consumers re-contextualize commodities by integrating them in their own worlds. These processes leave neither the significance of the object nor the social life and cultural identity of the consumer unaffected... Processes of appropriation can include elements of objectification, incorporation and finally conversion of the created into new regimes of value and new processes of objectification.¹²⁵

Why she insists on omitting the term domestication altogether and seems to replace it with appropriation—a term Silverstone *et al.* as mentioned use as one of four stages in the process of domestication—is somewhat bewildering,¹²⁶ but her very introduction of the concept in a design history context is interesting.¹²⁷

The concept of domestication is a methodological tool devised to analyse how users turn commodities into functional things, meaningful objects and expressive symbols. One of its most attractive qualities is that it follows the artifacts way past the purchase phase and thus facilitates studies not only of consumption but also of use. This feature alone should reveal its potential value to design history. It is, however, a sociological concept, and as such not necessarily all that easy to apply to historical studies. As

124. Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley, *op.cit.* p 15-31

125. Gertrud Øllgaard, “A Super-Elliptical Moment in the Cultural Form of the Table: A Case Study of a Danish Table“ in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1999 p 144 (See notes 4 & 5 p 155 for references to Silverstone *et al.*)

126. It should be mentioned that Silverstone *et al.* themselves admit that from the “perspective [of anthropology] appropriation stands for the whole process of consumption as well as for that moment at which an object crosses the threshold between the formal and the moral economies.”: Silverstone, Hirsch and Morley, *op.cit.* p 22

127. The British design historian Penny Sparke has, in a study of how aluminium kitchen utensils were domesticated in early 20th century USA, used the *term* domestication to signify a dynamic process of reciprocal transformation in a manner very close to that indicated by the *concept* domestication as developed by Silverstone *et al.* However, she makes no mention of the concept and does not refer to any of its literature, and her use of the term must thus be said to be of a more generic kind: Penny Sparke, “Cookware to Cocktail Shakers: The Domestication of Aluminum in the United States, 1900-1939” in Sarah Nicols (ed.), *Aluminum by Design* (Pittsburgh/New York: Carnegie Museum of Art/Abrams, 2000) p 112-139

mentioned above, there are many methodological challenges in studying use and consumption that renders direct methodology transfer difficult. Like most concepts from the social sciences, domestication is developed from studying contemporary situations and phenomena, where use can be analysed *in situ* and in real time. Historians are not that fortunate. As discussed above, the American design historian Jeffrey L. Meikle claimed that “we have no way of knowing with certainty how and why consumers at a given historical moment responded to particular products”.¹²⁸ He continues:

How can we know how and why people responded to the products... that surrounded them? How do we know what the results of design mean to the people who negotiate them, often unselfconsciously, in their daily lives?¹²⁹

His fellow American colleague Paul Betts likewise observed that studying “how [consumers] understand and use [products]... effectively represents a sobering epistemological limit for all historians of material culture.”¹³⁰

I believe Meikle and Betts are mostly right, albeit perhaps somewhat pessimistic, because I still think it is possible to achieve some understanding of how users matter in design history. Getting at the real users *in situ*, e.g. by means of ethnomethodology, will rarely be the solution. Rather, empirical studies of historic use and consumption is probably better conducted by going after the imagined users or the represented users.¹³¹ One way of doing so, is by focusing on the arenas and actors of mediation, translation and transformation discussed in this chapter.

So, if we do not want to become social scientists, but remain historians—can domestication still be a rewarding concept? I’d answer in the affirmative, but propose raising the level of abstraction, as it were. As discussed hitherto, the concept refers to how concrete products/objects/technologies undergo transformations in the hands of their users. But how about more abstract entities? Can theories, systems, beliefs and ideas be said to be domesticated in a similar manner? The STS literature discussed above would surely support such a juxtaposition, as it time and again treats *facts* (scientific knowledge) and *artifacts* (technological products/systems) as equal in terms of theoretical and methodological development.¹³² In line with this approach, Sørensen *et al.* has argued that “facts may be domesticated in a manner similar to that used with artifacts.”¹³³ It should thus be possible to talk about not only the domestication of

128. Meikle, *op.cit.* p 194

129. *Ibid.* p 195 And, moreover: “These questions are all the more important now that most of us have abandoned a straightforward Frankfurt School-inspired assumption of passive consumers completely at the mercy of manipulative capitalists.”

130. Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) p 19

131. A good example can be found in a recent cultural history of the Piaggio *Vespa* scooter where the users are eminently present, e.g. through the owner’s clubs. In a design and domestication perspective, it is particularly interesting the way in which the intricate relationship and communication between the users/clubs and the manufacturer is analysed: Thomas Brandt, *Frie hjerter og små motorer. Kulturell produksjon, formidling og bruk av den italienske Vespa-scooteren, 1946-1969* [Doctoral dissertation] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2006)

132. See e.g.: Pinch and Bijker, *op.cit.* p 17-50 and Latour, *op.cit.* The latter even introduces the term “technoscience” in order to surpass the conventional conceptual divide between the two (p 174-175).

products, media and technologies, but also about the domestication of ideas, theories and ideologies.¹³⁴

Of course, me being a user of a theory/idea (the concept of domestication) and adapting to and transforming it to better suit my needs and desires (a theoretical framework and methodology geared at the study of transformations occurring in negotiations between design ideologies and their users) is itself a process of domestication. I am, in fact, to use Roger Silverstone's own words from his recent reassessment of the concept, "domesticating domestication".¹³⁵

Sørensen has argued that "the domestication concept could be seen to have a wider potential than its apparent situatedness within the moral economy of the household."¹³⁶ Silverstone has described "[d]omestication as a process of bringing things home—machines and ideas, values and information", thus indicating that the concept can be applied to facts (ideas/ideologies) as well as artifacts (objects/products).¹³⁷ Still, talking about the domestication of ideology (or theories, knowledge, beliefs, ideas) is, to my knowledge, a road less travelled in domestications studies, but not completely without precedents—although these are not always self-proclaimed domestication studies and do not necessarily refer to the concept as it has been introduced above.

I will briefly present two such studies from the field of history of technology, but first I wish to mention a brief remark made by the Spanish design historian Anna Calvera that might indicate which direction I am heading. In an article on the challenges in constructing regional narratives in design history, Calvera observes that:

there is a process of adaptation of the ideas and aesthetic references, or technological innovation, coming from abroad and, through feedback, results become subtly different.¹³⁸

Although Calvera, as Fry and Øllgaard in the examples above, does not use the term domestication, she does refer precisely to one aspect of what I would call the domestication of ideology. What she is saying is that the contents, forms and meanings of ideas/theories/knowledge are transformed by their users—just like the case is with the

133. See e.g.: Knut H. Sørensen, Margrethe Aune and Morten Hatling, "Against linearity—On the cultural appropriation of science and technology" in Meinolf Dierkes and Claudia von Grote (eds.), *Between Understanding and Trust—The Public, Science and Technology* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000) p 240-241

134. An equivalent argument has also been made by the French Sociologist Jean Baudrillard in his discussion of how use value can be transformed into exchange value, symbolic value and sign value. The general validity of his position is not my concern here, but he makes a very interesting remark about how these social transformations of value are not restricted to artefacts: "In principle, nothing is immune to the structural logic of value. *Objects, ideas, even conduct* are not solely practised as use values, by virtue of their "objective" meaning, in terms of their official discourse—for they can never escape the fact that they may be potentially exchanged as signs, i.e., assume another kind of value entirely in the very act of exchange and in the differential relation to the other that it establishes." (my italics) This is, in effect, to say that ideas and their meanings are transformed no differently than artefacts and their meanings: Baudrillard, *op.cit.* p 78

135. Silverstone, *op.cit.* p 229-248

136. Sørensen, *op.cit.*

137. Silverstone, *op.cit.* p 233

138. Anna Calvera, "Local, Regional, National, Global and Feedback: Several Issues To Be Faced With Constructing Regional Narratives" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2005 p 380

domestication of products. In my opinion, though, she could have left out the word “subtly” from the above passage, as such transformations can be quite striking. What is lacking in Calvera’s description in order to make it domestication proper, however, is that such a process, I would argue, entails not only the adaptation *of* the ideas/aesthetics/technologies, but also the adaptation *to* the ideas/aesthetics/technologies. Domestication is relational, dialectic, reciprocal—it is *co-production*.

Technology does not come alone. As discussed introductorily, Thomas Hughes has eloquently demonstrated this and called attention to *the seamless web of sociotechnology*. So, when the Norwegian historian Per Østby studied the domestication of the car in the Norwegian society, the car is about as far from an autonomous artifact as possible. Østby’s car is a large sociotechnical system where politics, economy, power, morality and ideologies are inseparable from and at least as important elements in the system as the artifact and physical infrastructure. This means that when Østby is analysing the domestication of the car (in a country with virtually non-existent car production), he is as much analysing the domestication of *ideas* about the car—or car ideologies.¹³⁹ As Sørensen also points out, this study clearly shows that domestication can be a highly rewarding concept not only for understanding transformations taking place when artefacts are being put to use in the realm of the home today, but also transformations taking place when ideas/knowledge/theories/moralities/ideologies are being put to use in the realm of a national community in a historical perspective.¹⁴⁰ It is here worth mentioning that Silverstone makes a point of comparing precisely the home and the nation as complex and contested units but still viable arenas for domestication processes.¹⁴¹ We have thus arrived at an understanding of domestication that should resonate nicely with Calvera’s above mentioned call for attention to the adaptation *of* (and *to*) ideas/aesthetics/technologies in the construction of regional (e.g. national) narratives in design history.

The beforementioned at times confusing use of the terms domestication and appropriation should not be overplayed. Silverstone *et al.* originally defined appropriation as one of four stages in the domestication process, but Silverstone has later argued that appropriation is too general a term for that purpose and suggested that commodification take its place as the first phase of domestication.¹⁴² This clarification, alongside the fact that domestication scholars themselves sometimes seem to use the terms domestication and appropriation more or less commensurately,¹⁴³ should allow for

139. Per Østby, *Flukten fra Detroit: Bilens integrasjon i det norske samfunnet* [Doctoral dissertation / STS rapport no. 24] (Trondheim: Universitetet i Trondheim, 1995) (see p 64 for explicit references to the concept of domestication as coined by Silverstone *et al.*) For an English excerpt of this study, see: Per Østby, “Escape from Detroit—The Norwegian conquest of an alien artifact” in Knut H. Sørensen (ed.), *The Car and its Environments—The Past, Present and Future of the Motorcar in Europe* [Proceedings from the COST A4 (Vol. 2) Workshop in Trondheim, Norway—May 6-8 1993] (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities (CEC), Directorate General XII, 1994) p 33-68

140. Sørensen, *op.cit.* p 47-50

141. Silverstone, *op.cit.* p 241-242

142. *Ibid.* p 233-234 This first stage is defined as follows: “Commodification refers to that component of the process of domestication, which in design, marketing, market research, the knowledge of pre-existing consumer behaviour and the formation of public policy, prepares the ground for the initial appropriation of a new technology.”

a joint venture or even a merger between the domestication approach and the appropriation approach.

The Swedish historian Mikael Hård and American sociologist Andrew Jamison have proposed an appropriation approach to studying how ideas (of technology, science and modernity) have transformed and been transformed through “use”. Although they prefer the term appropriation to domestication, they do refer and relate to parts of the domestication studies discussed above, and their approach is very similar to what I will call the domestication of ideology. In the introduction to their 1998 edited volume *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology* they describe the vantages of the appropriation approach as follows:

The book investigates some of the ways in which visions of technology are shaped by national intellectual traditions... [and] suggests that intellectuals tried to ameliorate the incorporation of modern technology by finding a place for it in one or another discursive framework. It is this process that we call intellectual appropriation... The goal usually was either to assimilate technology into the existing culture or to adjust culture to the intrinsic demands posed by technology.¹⁴⁴

Hård and Jamison here point out three central concerns: Firstly, their subject matter is not technology *per se*, but *visions* of technology. And studying the appropriation of visions is more or less just another term for studying the domestication of ideology. Secondly, the authors corroborate the validity of national communities as suitable arenas for studying intellectual appropriation (or the domestication of ideology). Thirdly, it becomes clear that transformation is a two-way street. The visions of technology are sought adapted by mediators to better suit existing conditions, but the mediators and conditions are at the same time reacting and adapting to the ideologies in questions. In their more recent book on the cultural history of science and technology Hård and Jamison sharpened this dialectical aspect:

Cultural appropriation is a process by which novelty is brought under human control; it is a matter of re-creating our societies and our selves so that new products and concepts make sense.¹⁴⁵

On the whole, though, this latter point may seem somewhat undercommunicated in the appropriation approach. The reciprocity of the transformation processes comes, I would argue, more to the fore by using the term domestication.

143. See e.g.: Sørensen, Aune and Hatling, *op.cit.* p 237-257. Regarding the commensurability of the terms, Sørensen *et al.* here stress that the “process of appropriation is not a simple integration of technology into a cultural setting. To domesticate an artifact is to negotiate its meaning and practice in a dynamic, interactive manner. This negotiation implies that technology as well as social relations are transformed. To use the concept of domestication as an analytical tool is to emphasize that the cultural appropriation of an artifact is a multidimensional process.” (p 140)

144. Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison, “Conceptual Framework: Technology Debates as Appropriation Process” in Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison (eds.), *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology—Discourses on Modernity, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998) p 12&15

145. Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison, *Hubris and Hybrids—A Cultural History of Technology and Science* (New York: Routledge, 2005) p 4

Whilst appreciating the ground gained by domestication studies and the similarities between this approach and their own, Hård and Jamison assert that “[a]lthough a cognitive dimension may be found in some of these [domestication] studies, their focus is on habitual action.”¹⁴⁶ What they are arguing, then, is not any principal distinction between the two approaches, but rather that appropriation connotes a higher level of reflection among the actors in the transformation processes than does domestication.

Sørensen has stated that “Pursuing the generic potential, domestication becomes a multi-sited process that transcends the household space, and in which the sites interact.”¹⁴⁷ Following this, and proposing that these sites can be found and should be traced on different levels or in different domains, I will argue in the following that the domestication of ideology in mid-twentieth century Norwegian industrial design can be followed and disclosed through a study of both the design community and the manufacturing industry. These two levels, or domains, can of course be said to comprise a multitude of domestication sites, so, for reasons of feasibility and clarity, one representative from each has been chosen: The magazine *Bonytt*, the main forum for the design community, and Figgjo, a manufacturer of ceramic tableware. The challenge, then, will be to trace this multi-sited domestication of design ideology.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter set out by outlining how the history of technology has both contributed to and greatly benefited from the rich theoretical and methodological developments in the field of science and technology studies (STS). A very brief and sketchy survey indicated that the way design has been dealt with in histories of technology has at times been cursory and conservative, other times more refreshing. Arguing that there nevertheless is a great potential in a closer integration and interaction between the history of technology

146. Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison, “Conceptual Framework: Technology Debates as Appropriation Process” in Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison (eds.), *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology—Discourses on Modernity, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998) p 15. Their reference is to: Lie and Sørensen (eds.), *op.cit.* It is interesting to note, though, that one of the contributors to Hård and Jamison’s volume, Aant Elzinga, seems to consider the two terms/approaches more or less synonymous, writing that “technological change... is contingent on diverse socio-cultural patterns and on history... We like to speak of this as the appropriation of technology, its domestication.”: Aant Elzinga, “Theoretical Perspectives: Culture as Resource for Technological Change” in Hård and Jamison (eds.), *op.cit.* p 31. Likewise, another contributor, Catharina Landström, seem to equate the meaning of the terms when she writes that “new technologies were appropriated or domesticated (Lie and Sørensen 1996) in quite different ways.”: Catharina Landström, “National Strategies: The Gendered Appropriation of Household Technology” in Hård and Jamison (eds.), *op.cit.* p 163. Landström then goes a long way in aligning their approach with what I call the domestication of ideology when she describes the ambition to “focus less on technology itself than on the ideas and ideologies that surround it.” (p 164) Moreover, Hård also uses the terms “domesticate”, “domestication” and “domesticating” for variation when discussing how the intellectual appropriation of technology takes place: Mikael Hård, “German Regulation: The Integration of Modern Technology into National Culture” in Hård and Jamison (eds.), *op.cit.* p 45,54&66

147. Sørensen, *op.cit.* p 47

and design history, it follows that design history as well might benefit greatly from exploring the theoretical frameworks and methodological insights of the STS field.

Clearly, there are many fundamental differences between the concepts science, technology and design, and it would thus be foolish to expect full congruence between science and technology studies and design studies. Still, there are also many and potentially fruitful similarities that deserve greater attention. The processes by which scientific facts/theories and technological artifacts/systems are formed and transformed can be strikingly comparable to how design ideologies and products are formed and transformed. Such an acknowledgement is the best argument for further exploration of a road hitherto less travelled; the potential STS theory and methodology may have to design history.

Translations of STS approaches to design history should be done with caution and respect, though. The dispersion and influence enjoyed by STS recently led the British sociologist Steve Woolgar to ask “Has STS... settled down and moved out to the suburbs?”¹⁴⁸ His answer is that popularity *may* come at a high price, but that the spread of STS is also a potential source for reaffirming and even renovating its integrity and provocativity:

As long as it can continue to identify and recruit new audiences, but at the same time resist its institutionalization and transformation into formulaic suburban life, STS will continue to be a worthy vehicle for ‘inside out thinking.’¹⁴⁹

So, not only can STS invigorate design history, but design history—as one of the “new audiences” Woolgar requests—might even return the favour by supplying new testing grounds for STS’ further development.

Another consideration to keep in mind for the historian is that theory and methodology should not be understood too rigidly. Trying to squeeze unruly and at times outright defiant empirical findings into a theoretical strait jacket can only result in poor history. The frameworks and concepts discussed above should, then, be interpreted and employed in such a way as to avoid the “‘Have theory, will travel.’” syndrome John Law cautioned against.¹⁵⁰

Actor-Network Theory is best understood, I would argue, as a general theory, a conceptual framework, and not as a methodological toolkit. Or as Law puts it, ANT is “better considered as a sensibility to materiality, relationality and process. Whether it is a theory is doubtful.”¹⁵¹ Theory or not, to design history, ANT comprises a framework that facilitates and informs a dynamic way of thinking about actants and relations. As such, it is present throughout this study, although it is made explicit only when the situation calls for it.

The Script metaphor offers a methodology and a vocabulary for the analysis of how products act as mediators, transporting and transforming meaning. The concept puts the

148. Woolgar, *op.cit.* p 340

149. *Ibid.* p 347

150. John Law, “After ANT: complexity, naming and topology” in Law and Hassard (eds.), *op.cit.* p 8

151. John Law, *After Method—Mess in Social Science Research* (London: Routledge, 2004) p 157

artefacts on center stage, and can be used to approach them from the perspective of production, consumption/use, or mediation. For reasons of feasibility, the present study does not consider actual user experiences, but focuses on design, production, and mediation. The users that appear are envisioned, predicted or imagined ones. Therefore, in the following, script analysis will not be employed to inquire into subscriptions, de-inscriptions and re-inscriptions, but to explore prescription, proscription, transcriptions and inscriptions. As with ANT, the script analyses are only occasionally spelled out in what follows, but continuously inspire the investigations made.

By “domesticating domestication” and transforming the concept from pertaining to analyses of how (media) technology is domesticated in the household to analyses of how ideology is domesticated in a national/professional setting, I have, I believe, constructed an advantageous approach to the project at hand. The mid-twentieth century Norwegian design community domesticated ideologies inherited from the traditional applied art movement (*brukskunstbevegelsen*) as well as imported from various international currents of the so-called “modern movement”. The concept of domestication becomes valuable when studying this process by following the actors in their construction, negotiation and mediation of these ideologies as played out in their main debate forum, the leading design magazine *Bonytt*. However, the domestication of ideology in Norwegian industrial design does not end with the writings of campaigning designers, enthusiastic journalists, ardent academics and organization men. The mediations between ideology and practice will also be traced in a domestication perspective. As such, the manufacturing industry—here represented by the ceramic tableware manufacturer Figgjo—represents a second site of domestication, where ideas and ideals undergo new negotiations and transformations in meeting other users, requirements and circumstances.

This chapter concludes Part II’s discussions on epistemological questions, historiographical issues, theoretical perspectives and methodological concepts—discussions necessitated by the lack of “indigenous knowledge” available to someone entering design history from more general or neighbouring disciplinary backgrounds. They may have been somewhat lengthy, but will hopefully constitute a solid basis for the empirical investigations to which we now shall turn.

Part III:

Constructing Design Discourse

Introduction: Constructing Design Discourse

Barely convalescing from the global effects of the Great Depression, the “hard thirties” came to an end in cautious economic optimism, but at the same time extreme international political turmoil. The new decade was only 99 days old when Norway was invaded and thrown head first into World War II. The Norwegian armed forces were caught off guard and were dwarfed by the German invasion troops. The king and government fled the country and spent the war in exile in London, from where they sought to coordinate the resistance and encourage their people. It should be clear, then, that our story begins at a most dramatic moment in time. The extraordinary political and social conditions of war and military occupation comprise the backdrop of the events we are about to pick up on.

It has been claimed that the war in many ways catalysed the modernisation of the Norwegian society. The appropriation of fossil fuel to military purposes spurred an extensive electrification of the nation. The German war machine instigated and boosted the development of heavy and energy-consuming industry. Moreover, the war years saw a substantial development in infrastructure: the railway system was expanded, roads were built and the number of telephones increased by 50%.¹ In more general terms and in an international perspective, World War II brought about many achievements in industrial organisation, manufacturing and material technology, and engineering that would greatly influence the development of industrial design (during and) after the war.

One might expect that discourse on design ideology and mediation and promotion of design did not have the highest priority or the best of circumstances and conditions during the war. This is only partially true, though, as there are some very interesting initiatives to be found that eagerly combined war effort requirements and concerns with well-known elements of modernist design ideology. Probably the most famous and comprehensive of these is the British Utility Scheme established in 1942, in which ambitions of resource control, social reform and modernist design propaganda combined to form a remarkable experiment.² As we shall see below, some of the ideas underpinning this project were present in Norway as well, but would not manifest themselves in such a comprehensive and organised manner as in Britain.

One general effect of the war and the occupation in Norway was an unparalleled experience of social and political unity. So much so that all the political parties ratified a Joint Programme (Fellesprogrammet) after the war, staking out the principal political tasks. This was chiefly the work of the Labour Party, who won a clear victory in the 1945 election, inaugurating the “sociodemocratic order” and the long tenure of Einar Gerhardsen as prime minister—a man who would become known as “the national father” (“landsfaderen”). In terms of international relations, the 1940s ended with Norway signing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1947, accepting

1. Berge Furre, *Norsk historie 1905-1990* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1992) p 200-201

2. Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 117-118. In 1944, in a Britain still at war, two other interesting initiatives for the advancement and promotion of design were launched: The Council of Industrial Design was founded, and a regular (but short-lived) supplement on design appeared in *The Architectural Review*: Jill Seddon, “The Architect and the ‘Arch-Pedant’: Sadie Speight, Nikolaus Pevsner and ‘Design Review’” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2007, p 29-41

USA's Marshall aid in 1948 and the subsequent membership in the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), and joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949.³ Thus, at the end of the decade, Norway had firmly placed itself in the "Western" society both politically and economically.

After the war, reconstruction became job number one. Not only the literal reconstruction of housing and infrastructure destroyed during the war, but also the reconstruction of the political and organizational systems, the economy, cultural life, and industry—in short; reconstructing the nation. Design, both as practice and as ideology, found its role in this process, just as it had in the wartime solidarity characterized by moral encouragement, patriotism, making do, and dreams of a better future. This connection between high politics and design is by no means as far-fetched as it might appear. Perhaps the best, or at least the most evident and symbolic illustration of this relation is prime minister Einar Gerhardsen's appeal to the design community, published in *Bonytt* after the war, urging everyone to contribute to the reconstruction, and reminding designers that the nation was in dire need of their special skills and expertise.⁴

But how did the design community themselves consider these skills and expertise? What was good design? In Section A below I will analyse how the Norwegian design community was *setting the agenda* and domesticated design ideology in the 1940s. What was Norwegian about Norwegian design? How should design relate to systems of manufacture? How should modernism relate to tradition? How did they interpret, react to and reform international modernism in its many shapes and sizes? These and other questions about *constructing design discourse* will be explored by presenting the most active, persistent and powerful actor networks, and discussing how the construction, mediation, and transformation of design ideology developed throughout the decade. The major actor networks were formed around the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst), and its principal arena of debate was the design magazine *Bonytt*. As this is the first introduction of these institutions that will prove most central throughout this study, a brief account of their origin is required.

The impact of World War II on Norwegian industry was massive, partly because of the special conditions and requirements of war-time production, but even more so in terms of long-term effects in its aftermath. The occupation of Norway was less severe than in many other countries, and the industry was generally operating as best it could given the circumstances. Of course, the Germans did to a certain extent confiscate facilities and redirect production towards military ends, at least in some industries. But they were also clients, and created employment for many through their projects and purchases. So many companies operated at full capacity, at least in the early stages of the war.⁵ However, as the war lingered on and consumed more and more resources, the shortage of goods and materials became increasingly problematic for the industry and resulted in makeshift solutions such as shoes made of fish skin and furniture upholstery made of paper. The drastic decline in foreign trade during the war made for a peculiar

3. Fritz Hodne and Ola Honningdal Grytten, *Norsk økonomi i det 20. århundre* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2002) p 185-187

4. Einar Gerhardsen, "Innsats" in *Bonytt* Vol. 6, 1946, p 1

5. Furre, *op.cit.* p 194-195

situation in terms of economy, industry, business and commerce. The lapse of import of a host of essential commodities resulted not only in a vast array of *ersatz* products, but also in increased exploitation of domestically available resources and an obvious seller's market. But, it also led to rigorous price controls and widespread black market trading.⁶

After the war, the government's financial and industrial policies favoured the development of large-scale heavy industry, such as e.g. metal works, over the manufactured goods industry. This was partly because heavy industry was seen as a vital instrument in building national wealth and the strength of the state, but there was another, more pragmatic side to this as well: The German occupation forces left behind many plans for and several half-finished plants for energy-intensive heavy industry based on Norway's vast resources of hydroelectric power.⁷ The largest and most well-known of these was the aluminium works in Årdal, on which construction began as early as 1941. By the end of the war, the plant was almost completed, and a state-owned company took over and production could begin in 1947.⁸

Nevertheless, the latter half of the 1940s was a soaring period for all branches of the manufacturing industry, because the nation was to be rebuilt after years of militarily prioritized production, rationing systems, goods shortages, and the destructions of the war. In terms of national economy and industrial performance, the reconstruction went fast. The levels of investments, gross domestic product, imports, exports and industrial output reached pre-war levels after just a few years. However, the shortage of goods persisted, partly because the rationing system was dissolved only slowly and gradually—much due to the limited supply of foreign currency and insufficient export.⁹ There was thus a huge market demand for almost anything that could be made by domestic manufacturers.

These massive macro-level changes in international politics, national economy and industrial patterns can be mirrored in the micro-level developments of any local community and culture—for example a little place called Figgjo, nearby the town of Sandnes in the Jæren district, just south of Stavanger city in Rogaland County in southwest Norway.¹⁰ In Section B below I will discuss the first phase of a business venture that grew out of the preconditions and contexts described above: A company resulting from resourcefulness in a time of restrictions and limitations, based in the exploitation of local resources, taking advantage of the obvious seller's market, and joining in the postwar drive for modernization towards a future of industrialized manufacture and a more competitive marketplace. In 1939, Figgjo was home to a tiny, bankrupt and closed hydroelectric power plant recently purchased by a couple of local entrepreneurs with absolutely no industry experience and who did not really not just what to do with their acquisition. In 1949, the facility was turned into a modern, forward-looking earthenware

6. Hodne and Grytten, *op.cit.* p 165-172

7. *Ibid.* p 172-174

8. Harald Rinde, "Den lange ventetida" in Rolv Petter Amdam, Dag Gjestland and Andreas Hompland (eds.), *Årdal—Verket og bygda 1947-1997* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1997) p 72-79

9. Hodne and Grytten, *op.cit.* p 182

10. For a study of industrial development in the Jæren district, see: Lars Gaute Jøssang, *Industrieventyret på Jæren 1800-2000* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2004)

factory employing 100 persons. How did this ever happen? And how did Figgjo's design strategy and design practice develop on their way from the "ashtray industry" towards the industrial art establishment? Through their ambition of quite literally *setting the table* in modern Norway, the company—through its design strategy and practice—also took part in *constructing design discourse*.

Section A:

Setting the agenda

5 Forming a forum: Establishing the design magazine *Bonytt*

5.1 Introduction

The establishment of the magazine *Bonytt*, published from 1941, marked an important transition for the Norwegian design community in terms of communication, mediation and outreach. A few other periodicals in related fields did exist, such as the architectural magazine *Byggekunst* (est. 1919), the popular home and interior decoration magazines *Viselv og våre hjem* (est. 1933) and *Hus og have* (publ. 1930-1937), as well as the art and culture magazine *Urd* (est. 1897), but, with the exception of the short-lived and infrequent *Brukskunst* (5 issues publ. 1930-1934), none of these can be said to have been design magazines in the way *Bonytt* would become. But how did this new design magazine come into being, and what was its background? What mission did the editors define for their creation? What was discussed in its columns, and how? This chapter will show how this forum for design discourse was formed and explore some of the central topics under debate in the years of formation.

Although *Bonytt* first was the result of a private, independent initiative, and became the official mouthpiece of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen norsk brukskunst) only in 1947, the close ties between the magazine and the organisation were evident from the start. In order to better understand what *Bonytt* was, then, a brief presentation of the organisation with which it would be intimately associated for three decades is required. The chapter thus starts out with an outline of the history of the National Association's predecessor, the Applied Art Association (Foreningen brukskunst) established in 1918, and the ideology it promoted.

Moving on to the establishment of *Bonytt*, its two founders will be presented, giving particular attention to the man who also would edit the magazine for thirty years, Arne Remlov. This is then followed by an analysis of the programme formulated by the editors and laid out in the very first issue of *Bonytt*, defining the publication's (desired) place in the design community and (intended) role in design discourse.

The second half of this chapter will explore the discussions on three topics that were given special concern in *Bonytt*'s early years. The first of these, which must be seen in light of the fact that the magazine was established in a society under wartime occupation, can be described as an attempt at arguing for functionalism as an apolitical and ahistorical truth. The second pertains to a particularly troublesome theme within a setting dominated by modernist design ideals; the debate on "decor in our time". The third and last trajectory, which in various guises will be a recurring issue also in later chapters, is the discussions on design and systems of manufacture; especially the relationship between craft and industry. But first, a little excursion into the organisational "pre-history" forming the background for the subsequent inquiry.

5.2 Background: The Applied Art Association

The Applied Art Association had been founded in 1918 by a group of enthusiasts as a means to improve what they perceived as the deplorable state of Norwegian applied art and craft in particular, and the sphere of production and material culture in general.¹ It was not a trade union for artists and craftsmen, but an interest group or organization intended to develop and promote the *field* of applied art and design (*brukskunst*).² This trait was reflected also in the organizational form. The statutes stated that the board should consist of seven members, plus a secretary, from the following trades/positions: An art historian, a museum representative (“museumsmann”), an architect, a craftsman, a decorative artist, a painter or sculptor, and an industry representative.³

The motivations and inspirations for founding the association were several. But it seems quite clear that organizations and movements in other countries have inspired the Norwegian enthusiasts.⁴ The first yearbook states explicitly that the intention was to found an association “similar to the Swedish Applied Art Association”⁵ (Svenska Slöjdföreningen), which had been founded already in 1845. The first chairman of the new Norwegian Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst), architect Harald Aars, had studied and worked in England during 1897-1898 where he learned about the views of Walter Crane, Charles Ashbee and the Art Workers’ Guild, as well as John Ruskin, William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. Deputy board member Harry Fett, art historian and Director General for Cultural Heritage (Riksantikvaren) was the first Scandinavian member of the German Workshop Union (Deutscher Werkbund) and was present at its famous meeting in Cologne in 1914 where Hermann Muthesius and Henry van de Velde fought their battle over typification and industrialization.⁶ In addition, Muthesius’ book *Stilarchitektur und Baukunst* from 1902 had been translated into Norwegian by the director of the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo), Henrik August Grosch, in 1909.⁷ Moreover, one of the organization’s founders, the goldsmith Jacob Prytz, had studied at the Königliche Zeichenakademie in Hanau, Germany from 1908 to 1910, where he with great interest

-
1. For more on the founding of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst), see: Alf Bøe, “Kunsthåndverk og kunstindustri 1914-1940” in Knut Berg, Peter Anker, Per Palme and Stephan Tschudi-Madsen (eds.), *Norges kunsthistorie* Vol. 6 (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1983) p 311-313
 2. The Norwegian term *brukskunst* will remain central throughout this study. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to translate into English without altering its meaning. In a literal sense, *brukskunst* would mean something like “useful art”, but the term soon became a cultural concept and took on a distinctive identity which assumed considerable momentum. In the name of pragmatism, I have chosen to go with ‘applied art’ and/or ‘design’, depending on situations and contexts.
 3. Harald Aars, *et al.* (eds.), *Foreningen Brukskunst Aarbok 1918-1919*, [yearbook] (Kristiania: Foreningen Brukskunst & Kirstes boktrykkeri, 1920) p 51
 4. Bøe, *op.cit.* p 308-310
 5. Aars, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 53 (“i likhet med Svenska Slöjdföreningen”)
 6. Randi Gaustad, *Foreningen Brukskunst 1918-1930: Program, utstillinger og kritikk* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1973) p 10-13
 7. Hermann Muthesius, *Stilarkitektur og bygningsarkitektur—arkitekturens og haandverkets skiftende former i det nittende aarhundrede samt deres nuværende standpunkt* [Transl. by Henrik August Grosch] [1902] (Kristiania: Cammermeyer, 1909). Grosch became a member of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) in its first year after being specially invited by the founders.

attended some lectures by Werkbund protagonist Peter Behrens.⁸ Thus, both directly and as mediated through Svenska Slöjdföreningen,⁹ the workings of Deutscher Werkbund and the ideas of Muthesius were of great importance to the foundation, organization and work of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst).

The program of the association reveals that its ideology contains aspects concurrent with those expressed within the frameworks of the foreign organizations mentioned above. The program texts of the first yearbook show that aspects regarding aesthetic quality and social welfare was at the very core of the association's concern: "The association's program is, like its name says, to strive to make all those things we need in our daily lives practically usable and artistically beautiful."¹⁰ The focus was clearly directed towards the domestic sphere, but both the usability aspect and the universalist aesthetic concern bear witness of a holistic and wide-ranging ideology. There was an important social aspect to the motivation for the association as well. The work to be done was considered necessary,

[n]ot so much for the sake of those who live on the sunny side, those who can choose without greater economic concern and can afford to seek help from creative artists, but for the sake of those who in many cases have to make do with the cheapest, the factory product, often the surplus of foreign mass production. To seek to decorate their homes so that everything from the smallest object to the entire room becomes simple, practical, robust and beautiful; that is to introduce culture to the homes... Therefore, the aim of the "Applied Art" is also connected with that of the modern social work.¹¹

But the ideology also included a national economic argument; in order for Norwegian products to be competitive with imported goods, quality had to be improved and awareness raised. One of the means by which the functional and aesthetic quality of products was to be improved was by refining industrial production. Just like Muthesius had done in Cologne in 1914, secretary Thor Kielland, Harry Fett and the rest of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) argued for the need of employing artists in the industry and developing type-products for machine production.¹²

Board member and art historian Carl W. Schnitler wrote in 1920 that "The modern form is at its core created by engineers and technicians." He ridiculed the "machine-hating" attitude of Ruskin and Morris, who he called "idealist romantics" and likened to Don Quichote! The industrial era was here to stay, and "machines, with the help of the artist, can become creators of beauty."¹³ This peculiar way of at the same time hailing

8. Thor B. Kielland, *Om gullsmedkunst i hundre år—J. Tostrup 1832-1932* (Oslo: Grøndahl, 1932) p 149

9. The influence of Deutscher Werkbund on Svenska Slöjdföreningen and its chief ideologist in the early 20th century, Gregor Paulsson, is discussed in: Gunnela Ivanov, "Den besjälade industrivaran—Idéerna kom från Tyskland" in Kerstin Wickman (ed.), *Formens rörelse—svensk form genom 150 år* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1995) p 45-61

10. Aars, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 1 ("Foreningens program er, som dens navn sier, at arbeide for at alle de ting vi trenger i det daglige liv, kan bli praktisk brukbare og kunstnerisk vakre")

11. *Ibid.* p 1 ("Ikke saa meget for deres skyld som lever paa solsiden, de som kan vælge uten større økonomiske hensyn og selv har raad til at søke hjælp hos skapende kunstnere, men for deres skyld som i mange tilfelder maa nøie sig med det billigste, fabrikkvaren, ofte overskuddet av fremmed masseindustri. At søke at smykke deres hjem, slik at alt fra den mindste ting til hele rummet blir enkelt, praktisk, solid og vakkert, det er at bringe kultur ind i hjemmene ... Derfor staar "Brukskunstens" maal også i sammenhæng med det moderne sociale arbeides.")

12. Gaustad, *op.cit.* p 19

and belittling the qualities of the industry and the engineer is even more evident in the wordings of the association's second and long-standing chairman (1920-1939), the goldsmith Jacob Prytz, who declared that industrial goods "must result, partly as engineering products, carefully harmonized in line and form, but in order for them to be good, the designer must also be an artist in his treatment of form."¹⁴ So, the prominence of industrial production and the skills of engineers were definitely appreciated, even admired, but artists, with their aesthetic expertise, were portrayed as the knight in shining armour coming to the rescue of the aesthetically illiterate.

Even though this machine friendly attitude conforming to the ideas of Muthesius and Deutscher Werkbund directly opposed the more hostile attitude towards industry and machine production advocated by the Arts and Crafts Movement, there was another aspect prevalent in the latter's ideology which very much would affect the work of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst)—the aesthetic moralism. Schnitler stated that

Beauty and the sense of the good form can... become everybody's possession—not just the wealthiest's. It must become so, because it results in increased well-being, greater happiness, higher standard of living. Beauty is in our time not just a matter of pleasure for connoisseurs,.. but a social factor of the greatest reach[.]¹⁵

This moralist notion that good taste was something that the masses had to be taught would dominate the work of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) throughout its lifetime. The association gladly assumed the role of church, its members that of missionaries, neoclassicist and later functionalist/modernist ideology was canonised as the official gospel, and the masses were considered heathens to be saved. Such moralist and patronizing attitudes was nothing new in the history of design ideology—the design elites had applied the tactics of "educating the market" in their efforts to gain momentum and acceptance for their design ideologies ever since the British decorative arts reform movements of the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁶

The most visible and probably the most effective missionary work conducted by the Applied Art Association during the interwar years was represented by the exhibitions. Among the larger ones were *New Homes (Nye Hjem)* in Oslo in 1920,¹⁷ *Form and Colour (Form og farve)* in Oslo in 1924, and the *National Exhibition (Landsutstillingen)*

13. Carl W. Schnitler, "Nye Hjem utstillingen—Den nye tid og den nye stil" in Jacob Prytz, *et al.* (eds.), *Foreningen Brukskunst Aarbok 1920*, [yearbook] (Kristiania: Foreningen Brukskunst & Kirstes boktrykkeri, 1921) p 6-10 ("maskinhatende... idealistiske sværmere... Den moderne form er i sin kjerne skapt av ingeniører og konstruktører... maskiner, gjennom kunstnerens hjelp, kan bli skjønnhetsskapende.")

14. Jacob Prytz, "Industri, håndverk og brukskunst" in Prytz, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 74 ("må jo fremkomme, tildels som ingeniørprodukter, fint avveiet i linje og form, men skal de være gode, må tegneren også være kunstner i sin formbehandling.")

15. Schnitler, *op.cit.* p 5 ("Skjønheten og sansen for den gode form kan... bli alles eie—ikke bare de velstaaendes. Den maa bli det, fordi den gir øket velvære, større lykkefølelse, høiere livsnivaa. Skjønheten er i vor tid ikke bare en nydelsessak for feinschmeckere,.. men en social faktor av største rækkevidde")

16. Brent C. Brolin, *Architectural Ornament—Banishment and Return* [Revised edition of *Flight of Fancy*, 1.ed. 1985] (London: W.W. Norton, 2000) p 75-90

17. For a report on this exhibition, see: Jacob Prytz and Thor Kielland, "Beretning of Nye Hjem utstillingen" in Prytz, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 87-93

in Bergen in 1928. Another measure which was planned, but never implemented on a permanent and official basis was a liaison office intended to function as an intermediary between artists and industry.¹⁸ Such match-making did occur, but on an *ad hoc* basis and resulting from the networks of personal relations established mainly by Thor Kielland and Jacob Prytz. The Association's secretary (1918-1928) Thor Kielland was an art historian and curator (director from 1928 to 1960) of the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo). The chairman Jacob Prytz was a partner in the family goldsmith company J. Tostrup, as well as a teacher (from 1914, head master from 1934 to 1956) at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens Håndverks- og Kunstindustriskole—SHKS). The two met when Kielland sat in on Prytz' classes in the mid-1910s to learn more about the practical side to the design field.¹⁹ Just to indicate how interwoven the life and work of these two leading figures of the association was, it might be mentioned that Prytz was a board member of the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts,²⁰ whereas Kielland wrote J. Tostrup's history in the occasion of the goldsmith company's centenary.²¹

The Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) promoted a design ideology based on the principle of social benefit in vigorous terms. But during the interwar period the chiefly academic circles of the association were largely unable to translate their theories into action, or rather—into products in accordance with their ideology.²² This situation was, however, also pending on issues such as production technology, industrial organization, knowledge distribution, etc.²³ Although the association invited industry representatives into their organization and sought dialogue, they never succeeded much in attracting a membership and audience in the industry. Apart from a few managers from industrial art companies with a personal interest in design, the members would, also in the mid-twentieth century period to be investigated below, largely be designers of various kinds, plus a body of interested architects and art historians.

It should be clear by now, then, that the primary actor network for the translation and mediation of design ideology in mid-twentieth century Norway was deeply rooted in organizational, ideological, and industrial structures dating back to the late 19th and early 20th century. As we shall see in this and later chapters, this heritage would prove to be both influential and troublesome in the design community's domestication of ideology, as the web of different predicaments making up the conditions for industrial

18. Gaustad, *op.cit.* p 21

19. Åke Stavenow, "Skapande människa" in Kurt Ekholm, Åke H. Hultdt and Åke Stavenow, *Jacob Prytz—12. juni 1886-1956* (Göteborg: Slöjdföreningens skola, 1956) p 15

20. N.N., "Oslo kunstindustrimuseum" in *Guldsmedkunst*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1926, p 31

21. Kielland, *op.cit.*

22. Kjetil Fallan, "Visionaries and Weathercocks—Norwegian Furniture Design c. 1920-1965" in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, 2003, p 105

23. In this sense, the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) had much in common with similar organisations in other countries. The British design historian Jonathan M. Woodham has asserted that "[t]he design reform pressure groups such as the DIA [Design and Industries Association] or the Council for Art and Industry, whether private or State-funded, had little real impact on British manufacturing industry. They were often seen as imposing a metropolitan and centralised set of values on the more pragmatic and 'real world' outlook of the heart of British manufacturing industry which was located in the regions": Jonathan M. Woodham, "British modernism between the wars: an historical 'Léger de main'?" in Anty Pansera (ed.), *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988) p 9

design practice, such as technological, industrial, economical, political, cultural, and social circumstances, would prove to be radically different from the 1940s onwards compared with the interwar period.²⁴

The single most important element in terms of design ideology discourse in the 1940s, was the Applied Art Association's (Foreningen Brukskunst) new propaganda vehicle and arena for debate: the magazine *Bonytt*. The establishment of *Bonytt* would turn out to be a somewhat unexpected and different solution to an ambition the Applied Art Association formulated more than twenty years earlier:

The association puts much emphasis on the agitative aspect of the cause... In order to carry out this enterprise in the most efficient manner, the association will found its own organ, a magazine for the modern Norwegian applied art.²⁵

The association did manage to set up a magazine simply called *Brukskunst* (*Applied Art*)—but it took over a decade for it to happen, and only a few issues were produced in the early 1930s before publication ceased in 1934. So, almost another decade would go by before the Applied Art Association achieved their goal of a magazine well suited for their “agitative” work—and the initiative this time would not come from the association itself.

5.3 The emergence of *Bonytt*

Bonytt (Called *Bo-nytt* the first four years) was founded as a “magazine for interior design and applied art”,²⁶ published by an independent private limited company, *Bonytt* aksjeselskap. Editors were the furnishings entrepreneur Per Tannum and the interior architect Arne Remlov. Tannum, born in 1912, was the proprietor of numerous Oslo businesses such as a furniture store (est. 1933) and a textile store (est. 1938), a consultancy (est. ca. 1940), as well as the founder of Bruksbo A/S (furniture design office and agency, est. 1941). He was later, in 1958, to found the idealistically based applied art community Plus in Fredrikstad.²⁷ Tannum's experience in setting up and running business organizations must have been pivotal in establishing a new magazine and publishing house. It was in any case an audacious venture undertaken by these two young men; Tannum was 29 years old at the time, Remlov only 27. But, reviewing the content of the

24. For a more concise example of how these problems were played out and peaked in the 1960s, see: Kjetil Fallan, “How an Excavator Got Aesthetic Pretensions—Negotiating Design in 1960s' Norway” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2007, p 43-59

25. Aars, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 2 (“Sterk vegt legger foreningen ogsaa paa sakens agitatoriske side... For paa den mest effektive maate at føre den aktion igjennem vil foreningen skaffe seg sit eget organ, et tidsskrift for den moderne norske brukskunst.”)

26. Which was also the magazine's subtitle (“Tidsskrift for hjeminnredning og brukskunst”). The name of the magazine, *Bonytt*, would translate something like “*Living News*”, but the official English designation adopted later was *Design for Living*.

27. Wenche Anette Johannessen, *Brukskunst-senteret PLUS—Per Tannums ønske om å etablere et designsentrum* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 12-13

early volumes of *Bonytt*, it seems clear that Remlov was the more articulate and active voice of the two editors. And whereas Remlov would edit the magazine for thirty years, Tannum stepped down after only six.²⁸ It should also be mentioned here that Tannum in 1944 expressed an ambition of substituting or supplementing *Bonytt* with a Norwegian-based Scandinavian magazine intended for the world market.²⁹ These plans, however, never materialized.³⁰

Arne Remlov was born in Oslo in 1914, growing up in a bourgeois shipping family. His original intention was to become an architect, but he did not have good enough marks to be admitted to the only school of architecture in Norway at the time, at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH). In stead, he went to Austria and studied at the The National School of Applied Arts in Vienna (Staatliche Kunstgewerbeschule Wien) from 1934 to 1937. The plan was to continue his studies for three more years at the Vienna Institute of Technology (Technische Hochschule Wien) to become a fully qualified architect. This plan was abandoned, however, due to financial problems caused by his father's death. He then moved to Munich where he studied furniture making as an apprentice for about a year, then got a job as an interior architect with an architectural firm in London before returning to Norway for Christmas 1938.³¹

Remlov's stay in Austria and Germany thus coincided with the period known as *Austrofascism*, demarcated by the Austrian Civil War of 1934 and Hitler's *Anschluss* of 1938. His student days were therefore hardly spent in an environment propitious for radical modernist design ideology. Remlov later described the design ideals he learned to appreciate in Vienna and Munich as "modern design, but not excessively modern design. It was not Bauhaus, with tubular steel and glass and such".³² This background might very well have contributed to his general attitude and values which have been described as rooted in "heritage and tradition, in sense of quality of form and execution—[yet] his mind was open also to new design. But deceit and nick-knacks had no room in his world."³³

Even though *Bonytt* was published by an independent private limited company, the editorial policy can hardly be said to have been independent. In addition to his job as an interior architect and his role as editor of and columnist in *Bonytt*, Remlov also became secretary of the Applied Art Association's local chapter in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) when it was restored and reorganized after the war.³⁴ Moreover, he was

28. His name disappears from: *Bonytt*, No. 10, 1947, p 1

29. Johannessen, *op.cit.* p 21-22

30. In 1950, the Swedish Applied Art Association (Svenska Slöjdföreningen) supplemented their equivalent to *Bonytt—Form*—with an internationally oriented magazine entitled *Kontur*. In the Norwegian community, this was frowned upon, and Knut Greve virtually accused the Swedes of having sabotaged the earlier Norwegian initiative and then stolen the idea with *Kontur*: Knut Greve, "Kontur" in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 35

31. Arne Remlov interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 04.11.1996 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]

32. *Ibid.* ("moderne design, men ikke outrert moderne design. Det var ikke Bauhaus, med stålrør og glass og sånn")

33. Anne Lise Aas, "Arne Remlov (1914-1998)" in *Arkitektnytt*, no. 19, 1998, p 18 ("arv og tradisjoner, i sans for kvalitet i form og utførelse—var hans sinn også åpent for ny design. Men juks og juggel hadde ingen plass i hans verden.")

34. The reorganization will be discussed below. One of the major changes was a organizational structure consisting of a national association and several local chapters.

Tannum's partner in the furniture agency Bruksbo A/S, but sold his share when he was asked to head the Applied Art Association in Oslo.³⁵ So, from the very beginning and for decades to come, the magazine functioned as the mouthpiece of the Applied Art Association. As if these hats were not enough to juggle, Remlov soon added a few more: He co-founded the Association of Interior Architects (Interiørarkitektenes Forening—IAF) in 1945, and he later became the director of the permanent sales exhibition FORUM (from its start in 1956 to 1982), an institution established by Oslo Trade and Industry Association (Oslo Håndverks- og Industriforening).³⁶ In short, the *Bonytt* editor and columnist was an influential, highly committed and well-connected actor.

The very first issue of the magazine was published in January 1941. In the editorial, Tannum and Remlov presented the character, scope, aims, and intentions of the new publication:

With this number of *Bo-nytt* the publication of the first Norwegian specialized magazine for interior design and applied art begins. Within the framework of these terms we will present current and factual articles written by craftsmen, artists, designers, architects and other professionals and interested parties. To the greatest possible extent, we will *completely objectively* treat *the essentials of that which is created* in the field of interior art, both here at home and abroad.

By means of our criticism and praise *we will seek to help the young who are setting up house*, so that they are made aware of *all the good which actually is being produced today*. We explicitly declare that the magazine first and foremost is intended as *a voice from professional to layman, but naturally hope that also professionals will take pleasure in and benefit from reading the magazine. The columns will be open to anyone competent who might have something at heart*. Skilful contributors are welcomed by the editors, and surely also by the readers.

Much effort will be employed to procure rich and relevant illustrations accompanying the articles, as well as seeing to that *the advertisements by means of good pictures shall be able to produce ideas and please the eye*. The size and scope of the magazine will be expanded considerably *as soon as the conditions of the world allow us* to present current material from other countries' work in our field.³⁷ [my italics]

35. Arne Remlov interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 04.11.1996 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]

36. Aas, op.cit.

37. Per Tannum and Arne Remlov, Editorial in *Bo-nytt*, No. 1, 1941, p 1 ("Med dette nummer av *Bo-nytt* startes utgivelsen av det første norske spesialtidsskrift for hjeminnredning og brukskunst. Innenfor rammen av disse begreper kommer vi til å bringe aktuelle og saklige artikler forfattet av håndverkere, bildende kunstnere, brukskunstnere, arkitekter og andre fagfolk og interesserte. I den utstrekning det er mulig, vil vi på en helt objektiv måte behandle det vesentlige av det som blir skapt på interiørkunstens område, både her hjemme og i utlandet.

Ved vår ris og ros vil vi søke å hjelpe de unge som setter bo, slik at de blir gjort oppmerksom på alt det gode som virkelig lages idag. Vi gjør uttrykkelig oppmerksom på at bladet først og fremst er ment som et organ fra fagmann til legmann, men håper selvsagt at også fagfolk vil ha glede og nytte av å lese tidsskriftet. Spaltene vil være åpne for enhver kompetent som måtte ha noe på hjertet. Dyktige medarbeidere ønskes velkommen av redaksjonen, og sikkert også av leserne.

Det vil bli lagt meget arbeide i å skaffe et rikt og aktuelt billedstoff til artiklene, samtidig som redaksjonen vil sørge for at også annonsene ved gode bilder skal kunne gi ideer og glede øiet. Bladets omfang vil bli betydelig utvidet så snart forholdene i verden blir slik at en kan bringe aktuelt stoff fra flere andre lands arbeider på vårt felt.")

Their expressed intention of presenting a “completely objective” account of events seems rather naive in retrospect. Already in selecting what they deemed “the essentials of that which is created in the field” the editors display an evident and explicit subjectivity. Furthermore, the magazine could hardly avoid a rather heavy bias resulting from the editors’ additional hats; their various involvements in business and organizational work would obviously influence the editorial work. In fact, in retrospect, Remlov admitted that the prime motive for establishing *Bonytt* was to improve the conditions for their business interests—designing, making and selling modern furniture—by directly influencing the public.³⁸

The moralism and aesthetic propagandism that the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) had adopted and cultivated during the interwar years was very much present also in the intentions of *Bonytt*. In creating “a voice from professional to layman”, the editors assumed a top-down approach based on the notion that the masses needed education and guidance by the true believers. This authoritarian attitude is only amplified and concretized by the aim “to help the young who are setting up house” through adopting the taste and value judgements of the magazine. However, their “hope that also professionals will take pleasure in and benefit from reading the magazine” and invitation of “anyone competent who might have something at heart” to contribute counterbalance the propaganda function and clearly show the magazine’s ambition to become an arena for debate.

Bonytt was firmly consolidated as a mouthpiece for the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) by way of an article in the first issue by art historian and secretary of the association (1932-1942), Knut Greve, presenting the association’s history, development and achievements from its foundation in 1918 up through the 1930s.³⁹ Greve’s role here as a link between the association and *Bonytt* is magnified by the fact that he from 1931 to 1934 had been the editor of the association’s own, short-lived magazine *Brukskunst (Applied Art)*.⁴⁰ Greve’s account of the association’s history has the character of success story, and so he asks whether the association now had accomplished all its goals and arrived at a satisfactory situation. His answer is more or less that they had indeed come a long way, especially considered the severely limited financial means at the association’s disposal, but that new challenges and tasks would continue to surface.⁴¹

More surprising, however, is it to discover that the editors seemed to be relatively content with the quality of present production. They saw their task as rather to inform the public of “all the good which is actually being produced today”. One might be tempted to ask whether Tannum and Remlov reckoned that the quest of better, cheaper and more beautiful products so vigorously proclaimed by the Applied Art Association ever since its foundation had been fulfilled to satisfaction, and that now, the job which remained was that of indicating and ratifying the correct products for the public to choose from.

38. Arne Remlov interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 04.11.1996 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]

39. Knut Greve, “Foreningen Brukskunst og norsk brukskunst”, in *Bo-nytt*, No. 1, 1941, p 8-11

40. Morten Bing, *Østkanthjemmene og østkantutstillingen—Boskikk og boligidealer i mellomkrigstidens Oslo* (Oslo: Norsk folkemuseum, 2001) p 210

41. Greve, *op.cit.*

Also, I believe the assertion of satisfactory quality and availability of products to be a quite curious attitude given the fact that this first issue was published in 1941, when Norway was under hostile occupation and the world was at war.⁴²

These observations might make more sense viewed in the light of the editors' primary occupations: Neither of them were designers primarily searching for favourable developments in job opportunities or design commissions, nor were they academic theoreticians safely sheltered from commercial concerns. Tannum made his living by selling furniture, and Remlov chiefly by composing interiors from existing products.⁴³ Thus, they were to a lesser degree than their designer and theoretician fellow partisans inclined to take radical stands on these matters. They were what we might call mediators, translators, aiming to instigate and participate in negotiations between ideologists, designers, industry and consumers.

Bearing the editors' various roles in mind, it is very interesting to note that vis-à-vis Tannum and Remlov's announcement that "the advertisements by means of good pictures shall be able to produce ideas and please the eye" we find an advertisement for the furniture store P.T. Møbler AS, depicting a bright but rather conventional bedroom interior with furniture in birch. Needless to say; P.T. Møbler AS was owned by Per Tannum. Several of his other companies, like Bruksbo A/S and Sette Bo A/S were also among the advertisers in the early days of *Bonytt*.

The impression of rather conventional aesthetic preferences is enhanced by the photograph selected as cover illustration for the first issue [Figure 5-1]. The photograph shows the interior of a house by the architect Knut Knutsen. Knutsen has later become quite famous, partly due to his collaboration with Arne Korsmo. But while Korsmo is commonly regarded one of the more internationally oriented and avant-garde actors operating within Norwegian modernist architecture in the interwar period, the characteristic of Knutsen is much more ambiguous.⁴⁴

He was one of the younger participants in the study tour organized by Oslo Association of Architects (Oslo Arkitektforening) to Holland in 1928, and is said to have been among the most impressed and convinced by the experience of Dutch avant-garde modernist architecture.⁴⁵ From the mid-1930s onwards, however, Knutsen's hallmark

42. Although they might have meant "today" as in "in our time", seeing the wartime conditions as an exceptional situation that would pass.

43. It should be mentioned that Remlov in fact did design some furniture. However, most of this was produced in limited series by cabinet makers and designed especially for Remlov's own larger interior design commissions.

44. As an illustration of the different images Korsmo and Knutsen projected, it might be mentioned that the interior architect Anne Lise Aas has explained that she quit the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) after the first year in 1946 partially to avoid Korsmo—who she described as "the prince of haze"—and "his magic circle", while when she returned to Oslo after having studied under Finn Juhl in Copenhagen with great determination sought out Knut Knutsen's architectural firm and managed to convince him to employ her: Anne Lise Aas interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 17.09.1996 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive] ("tåkefyrste" "hans tryllekrets"). It should be noted, though, that she during the war worked as an intern at Karen and Odd Brochmann's architectural firm—something which must have instigated or at least catalysed her antipathy to Korsmo. As a newly qualified architect in the mid-1930s, Odd Brochmann had worked as an assistant for both Korsmo and Knutsen, and has never made any secret of his greater affection for the latter of the two. See e.g.: Odd Brochmann, *Rent Bord—En historie om funksjonalismen og funksjonalistene i Norge* (Oslo: Arkitektnytt, 1987) p 63-66

45. Wenche Findal, *Norsk modernistisk arkitektur—om funksjonalismen* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1996) p 43

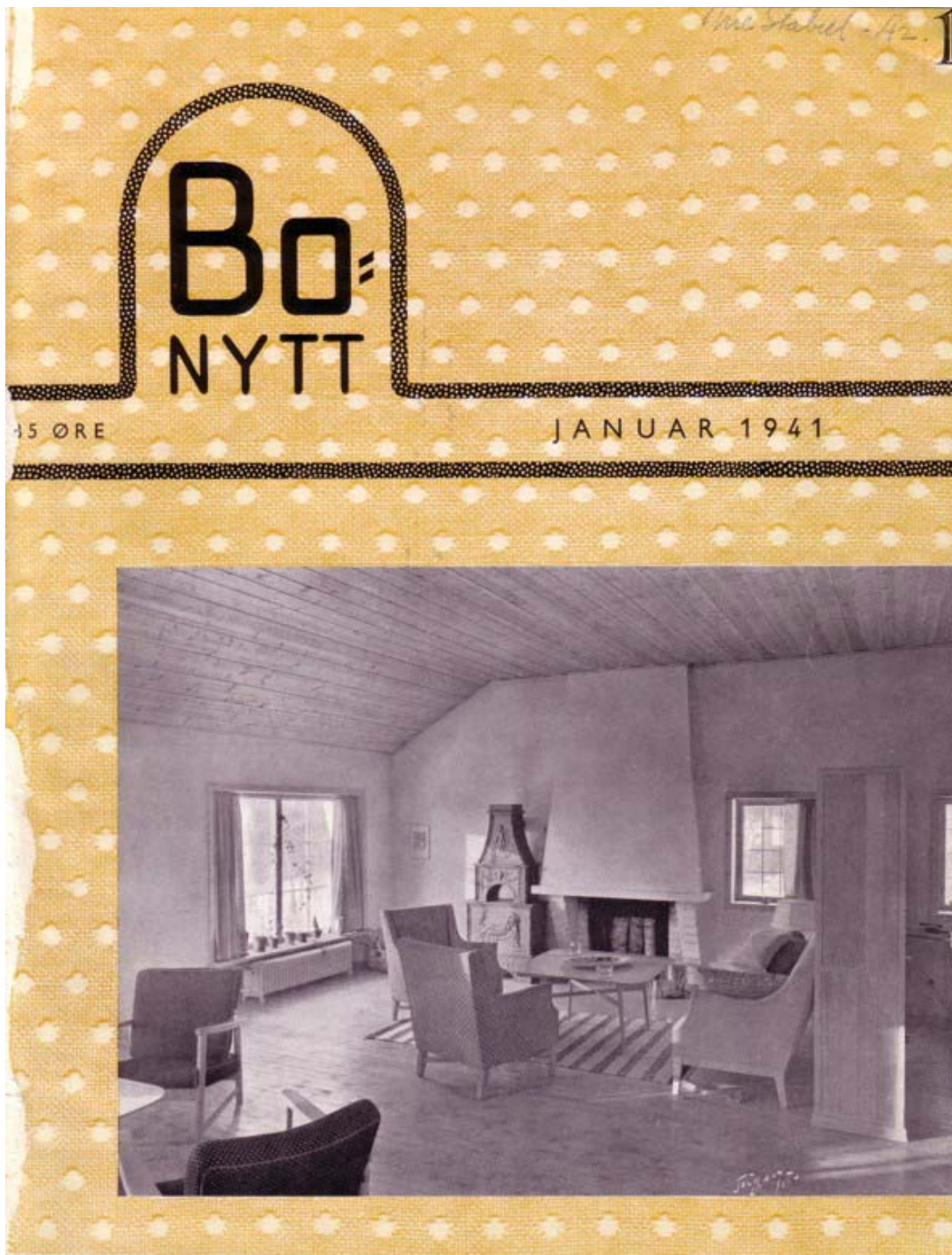


Figure 5–1: Cover of the very first issue of *Bo-nytt*, no. 1, 1941. The photograph shows an interior by architect Knut Knutsen.

became an interpretation of modern architecture based on greater respect for nature and environment combined with the development and integration of traditional materials, construction methods and building elements.⁴⁶ His incorporation of tradition by way of

using e.g. wood panelling facades and gable roofs has even been characterized as “homelike” (“hjemlig”).⁴⁷

This impression of Knutsen’s work is most fitting to the interior photo illustrating the cover of the first issue of *Bonytt* as well. The windows with small panes, the pine panelled ceiling, the open fireplace *and* adjacent wood-burning stove constitute a space saturated with traditional elements, but strictly composed and beaming with light. The furniture gives off the same feel: The easy chairs in front of the fireplace are rather neo-classical in shape, but executed with highly stringent lines and bright upholstery. The armchairs in the lower left corner of the picture represent a much more modernist formal language, but their framework in bright wood still conform to the interior’s general feeling of tradition and convention—albeit given a contemporary interpretation.

So, given the function assigned to the photograph, as the very first cover illustration of the new magazine, we must assume that Knutsen’s interior was seen by the editors as exemplary and as representing a taste, style, or set of values which they wanted to communicate to and promote among the public. The depicted interior no doubt accommodates relatively wealthy, upper middle-class, bourgeois residents. Tannum and Remlov clearly belonged (or aspired) to this same segment of the population, and so did probably the lion’s share of the readers. And to those who did not, the “bourgeois modern” promoted by *Bonytt* might function as food for their aspirations, dreams and ambitions.

5.4 Seeing functionalism as an apolitical and ahistorical truth

As we have seen, the program presented in the first editorial made little mention of the peculiar circumstances under which the new magazine was launched, that is, the restrictions, rationing, and shortages posed by the Second World War. Were the editors afraid of censorship? Or were they merely more interested in setting the agenda regarding design ideology? An analysis of *Bonytt* during the war years indicates that the latter seems more plausible. But although the emphasis was on discussing the larger questions of design ideology in various ways, the shadows of the war loomed large and did make their mark in *Bonytt* from time to time.

Bonytt was founded in 1941, during the World War II German occupation of Norway. These circumstances may not seem ideal for promoting modernist design ideology. Commenting on editing *Bonytt* during the war years, Remlov has later stated that “[w]e were always afraid of some nazi-stuff coming into the picture.”⁴⁸ There is a persistent myth to the fact that the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century was greatly opposed to modernist ideology and practice in art, architecture and design. The shutting down of

46. Nils Georg Brekke, Per Jonas Nordhagen and Siri Skjold Lexau, *Norsk arkitekturhistorie* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 2003) p 347

47. Arne Gunnarsjaa, *Arkitekturleksikon* (Oslo: Abstrakt, 1999) p 415

48. Arne Remlov interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 04.11.1996 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive] (“Vi var hele tiden engstelig for at det skulle komme noe nazigreier inn i dette bildet.”)

the Bauhaus by the German nazi government in 1933 is often seen as the definitive confirmation of this assertion. However, this myth has been criticised and nuanced quite dramatically by the British design historian John Heskett.⁴⁹ The American historian Paul Betts has also shown how the nazi regime adopted, incorporated and assumed much of the design practice established through what he refers to as “Weimar modernism”—after exorcising its potential “jewish” or “Bolshevist” contents.⁵⁰ This seemingly paradoxical situation can be seen as an expression of a cultural mode the American historian Jeffrey Herf has argued was widespread in interwar Germany and dubbed “reactionary modernism”.⁵¹ In Italy, the ties between fascism and modernist design and architecture were even less problematic.⁵² This is perhaps best exemplified in the person of the most celebrated architect of Italian interwar modernism, Giuseppe Terragni, who not only designed stark modern buildings for the fascist party (especially the two *case del fascio*—one in Como, one in Lissone), of which he himself was a passionate member—Terragni even fought on the Russian front during World War II.⁵³

Neither in Norway was the antagonism between nazism and modernist design absolute: Arne Korsmo, decidedly one of Norway’s most progressive modernist architects, proudly designed the new office of Josef Terboven—Nazi Germany’s commissioner general in Norway—in the Parliament Building in 1940.⁵⁴ This particular incident, though, probably says more about the job situation for architects at the time than about Korsmo’s political affiliations. Still, it indicates that at least parts of the design community were more interested in their profession than in politics, and saw no reason to entangle the two.

The fact that *Bonytt* was published continuously throughout the entire war and thus diffusing modernist propaganda—although the modernism preached by *Bonytt* was less radical and revolutionary than the one connected with the Bauhaus—demonstrates that there is little to suggest that the German nazi occupying power in Norway to any significant extent opposed modernist ideology, at least not the *Bonytt* version of it. In fact, it might seem as though the major obstacles the magazine encountered were rather

49. John Heskett, “Design in Inter-War Germany” in Wendy Kaplan (ed), *Designing Modernity—The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995) and John Heskett, “Modernism and Archaism in the Third Reich” in *Block* No. 3, 1980, p 13-24

50. Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) p 23-72 and Paul Betts, “The Bauhaus and National Socialism—a Dark Chapter of Modernism” in Jeannine Fiedler and Peter Feierabend (eds.), *Bauhaus* (Köln: Könemann, 1999) p 34-41

51. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism—Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)

52. The topic is explored in: Dennis P. Doordan, “Political Things: Design in Fascist Italy” in Wendy Kaplan (ed.), *Designing Modernity—The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995) p 225-255

53. Attilio Terragni, Daniel Libeskind and Paolo Rosselli, *The Terragni Atlas—Built Architecture* (Milano: Skira, 2004) and Andrea Branzi, *Introduzione al design italiano—una modernità incompleta* (Milano: Baldini&Castoldi, 1999) p 82-87

54. Alf Sture interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 19.09.1997 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]. Sture was a student of Korsmo at SHKS from 1937 to 1940, and worked for a period as his assistant. After the German invasion in April 1940, Sture joined his infantry regiment for one week’s battle before they retreated to Sweden. It was upon Sture’s return to Norway in the summer of 1940 that Korsmo invited him to see his latest work: Terboven’s office.

prosaic: in 1944 and 1945 only four issues pr. year could be produced due to paper rationing.⁵⁵ Still, the occupation must have had some sort of preclusive censoring effect, because when the war was over Arne Remlov was happy that “[n]ow, there is nothing which can not be discussed”.⁵⁶

Given the circumstances, it is easy to understand the strategy of arguing for functionalism as an apolitical truth. But the *Bonytt* discourse of the 1940s contains a different but related strategy aimed at establishing the functionalist ethos as a universal truth; that of making it ahistorical. In the 1920s, neoclassicism had a large following and is often portrayed as the bridge between historicism and modernism. In Norway, it can also be seen as an interlude between the national traditionalism so prominent around the time of the dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905 and internationally inspired modernism of the 1930s. The wartime occupation, on the other hand, spurred a general sentiment of patriotism that could be said to revive national traditionalism. Against this rather curious backdrop, the early years of *Bonytt* saw some ardent arguments in favour of national traditionalism as well as classicist ideals, and both were portrayed as true and eternal functionalism. A key figure in promoting the particular blend of wartime effort and national traditionalist ideals was the architect Arnstein Arneberg, whereas the ceramist Jens von der Lippe the eternal truths of functionalism in ancient ideals.

Already in the very first issue of *Bonytt*, Arneberg presented an initiative for more adequate furniture and home articles in light of the pressing conditions caused by the war. Nine months after the German invasion of Norway, he tells of the already extensive devastation of houses, homes, interiors, and household effects. Both products and materials were getting harder and harder to obtain. Needless to say, improving this situation was a difficult task. The initiative here promoted by Arneberg, the Committee for Norwegian Household Articles in war damaged homes (Nemda for Norsk Husbonad i krigsskadde heimer), aimed to co-ordinate the design, manufacture, and distribution of “solid, beautiful household effects to reasonable prices.”⁵⁷ But what Arneberg saw in this initiative was not primarily a way of repairing the damages of war, but a way of improving Norwegian design. Because even disregarding war-time difficulties, the work the Committee—led by Arneberg—was set up to do represented quite a challenge in Norway:

It can not be denied that interior design and furniture art—if one can use such a term, despite extensive and good work form the applied art and domestic industry communities—does not have a high standing in this country... It is evident that where furniture art is built on national themes, it often results in outright copying of old furniture forms that do not lead anywhere[.]⁵⁸

55. *Bonytt*, No. 1, 1944, p 33

56. Arne Remlov, “Åpning” in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 70 (“[n]å er det ingenting som ikke kan omtales”)

57. Arnstein Arneberg, “Nemda for norsk husbonad og dens arbeid” in *Bo-nytt* no. 1, 1941, p 2 (“solid vakkert innbo til rimelige priser.”)

58. *Ibid.* p 2-3 (“Det lar sig ikke nekte at hjemsinnredning og møbelkunst—hvis man kan bruke et slikt uttrykk, tross meget og godt arbeid fra brukskunst- og husflidshold—ikke står særlig høit her i landet ... En ser jo at der hvor det bygges over det nasjonale i møbelkunsten, blir det så ofte en direkte kopiering av gamle møbelformer som ikke fører frem”)

Arneberg first made a name for himself in the years following the dissolution of the union with Sweden in 1905 with an architecture that was highly inspired by national motifs and building traditions, without reproducing them in a historicist sense. So, the solid, beautiful and efficient furniture and household effects he rallied for was to be developed from and inspired by national traditionalist ideals and models, but not by copying them. He pointed out a couple of exclusive nineteenth century chairs as exemplary in this respect, and one of the captions read: “A simple, good chair. Just as functionalistic today as it was more than a hundred years ago.”⁵⁹ Describing this early nineteenth century chair as *functionalistic* can only be interpreted as an ironic critique of what Arneberg probably regarded as an exaggerated craving for formal revolution and *carte blanche* among the more progressive modernists. These differences in aesthetic preferences and ideals aside, they could certainly all subscribe to Arneberg’s assertion that “better and more beautiful homes... will cause heightened culture and spiritual rising”, and his hopes that better product design might also open possibilities for export.⁶⁰

Similar views on the eternal truths of good design, but emphasizing the soundness of ancient ideals rather than national traditionalism, were expressed by the studio ceramist Jens von der Lippe, who also taught at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS). In one of his first of a vast number of *Bonytt* contributions, he wrote about his own trade; pottery. The article contained historical and technical information about pottery production, its material, process, profession and product. As such, it formed part of the magazine’s “enlightenment” project of educating the masses. More interesting are von der Lippe’s thoughts on design ideology. He started out by declaring the vases of ancient Greece as the zenith of ceramic crafts, by virtue of their “noble... form and decor.”⁶¹ He then hailed the functionalist pioneers, and Le Corbusier in particular, for attempting to construct a “practical-aesthetic view of our environment”, but denounces how their project partly failed in the first round after the “greater public got hold of it. It became a “style”, without content”. But he saw that in recent years “new life has begun to surge in this appropriateness-accented movement”, and applauded what he observed as a tendency that “the things one surrounds oneself with shall be utensils, tools.”⁶²

Von der Lippe portrayed the ceramist as something of a functionalist by ancient heritage—that is, that a competent ceramist by definition always had and always would make products optimized and defined by their utilitarian function alone. He elucidated this argument with a visually striking, but otherwise not very convincing illustration [Figure 5-2]. This is of course a severely revisionist and determinist approach to history—projecting 20th century concepts, ideas and terms into ancient history is a highly questionable but frequently used method of legitimatizing one’s views.

59. *Ibid.* p 3 (“En enkel, god stol. Like funksjonalistisk idag som for over hundre år siden.”)

60. *Ibid.* (“bedre og vakrere hjem... vil bety øket kultur og åndelig reisning.”)

61. Jens von der Lippe, “Keramikk” in *Bo-nytt*, No. 2, 1941, p 5 (“edle... form og dekor.”)

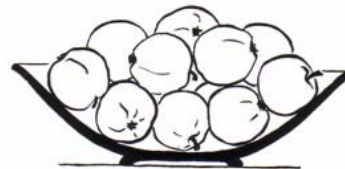
62. *Ibid.* p 8-9 (“praktisk-estetiske syn på våre omgivelser... store publikum fikk tak i den. Den ble en “stil”, uten innhold... begynt å komme nytt liv i denne hensiktsbetonte retningen... tingene en har rundt sig skal være bruksting, verktøi.”)



Keramikeren må tenke sig vel om når det skal lages en ny modell. Når man skal ta op en haug netter, holder en ikke hendene slik som ovenfor, men slik som billedet nederst viser.



En fasong som denne kan se bra ut på tegningen, men når man tegner inn eplene som skal legges i fatet, må man uvilkårlig sette spørsmålstegn ved den brede, utbrettede kanten, — hvad skal den være til?



Det blir da innlysende at det er riktigere når det gjelder en skål at formen er omsluttende, som denne:



Figure 5–2: Visually striking, but logically questionable rhetoric illustrating Jens von der Lippe’s article on ceramics and functionality in *Bo-nytt*, No. 2, 1941. The captions read, from the top: (1) “The ceramist must reflect thoroughly when planning a new model. When picking up a pile of nuts, you do not hold your hands like shown above, but like the bottom picture shows.” (2) “A shape like this might look good in drawing, but when you trace the apples to be placed on the dish, you must involuntarily question the wide, unfolded flange,—what is it for?” (3) “It is then self-evident that it is more correct, regarding a bowl, that the shape is enclosing, like this:”

But the most fascinating aspect about his interpretation of this functionalism is that he regards it as a dual responsibility, as a dialogue between designer/craftsman and user:

A mug that shall *stand* at the table so that one can *grasp* it and *pour* from it—it must stand, and stand well, not tip over. And the handle must be good to hold, and the spout must pour

properly... No, who could have thought of all this when the recently acquired mug sits on the table? Well, the ceramist has!—And if he has not, he is a poor ceramist... The ceramist must ensure that the item is appropriate for its use, but he who buys must make sure he gets what he needs—he must not buy a saw with which to hammer!... No, a mutual understanding is required. He who makes something should study the wishes and demands of the buyer, and the buyer will enjoy the item much more if he knows a little about how it is made.⁶³

Von der Lippe did not, like so many modernist missionaries did, incapacitate and passivate the users. On the contrary, he empowered the user. Yes, making good, functional, and usable objects was the responsibility of the designer and manufacturer. But, he said, the user has both power and responsibilities in his capacity as consumer. His true power can, however, not be fully asserted unless the user increases his knowledge of design and production. This argument sure brings another aspect to the evangelistic enlightenment-project of the modernist missionaries.

It is imperative to understand, that when Jens von der Lippe uses the term functionalism and asserts that the only correct form is that which is derived from the function of the object, it does not mean he subscribes to every dogma connected with inter-war avant-garde modernist ideologies.⁶⁴ The ferocious aversion to ornament, for instance,—which had been a central argument in avant-garde modernist ideologies ever since its most vehement manifestation in Adolf Loos' *Ornament und Verbrechen*, was not even an issue for von der Lippe.⁶⁵ On the contrary; he argued that the tendency towards comprehensive decoration in contemporary Norwegian ceramics was a positive trend released by a special, national surplus of decorative enthusiasm.⁶⁶

63. *Ibid.* p 5-8 (“En mugge som skal stå på bordet for at man kan ta den og skjenke av den—den skal stå, og stå godt, ikke velte. Og hanken skal være god å ta i, og tuten skal skjenke ordentlig... Nei, hvem har tenkt på alt dette når den nyinnkjøpte kannen står på bordet? Jo, det har keramikeren gjort!—Og hvis han ikke har gjort det, er han en dårlig keramiker... Keramikeren skal passe på at tingen er riktig til sitt bruk, men den som kjøper må passe på at han får det han skal ha—han må ikke kjøpe sig en sag til å hamre med! ... Nei, her må det gjensidig forståelse til. Den som lager noe bør studere kjøperens ønsker og krav, og den kjøpende vil ha meget mer glede av tingen når han vet litt om hvordan den er laget.”)

64. The art and design historian Fredrik Wildhagen has claimed that even though “[Jens von der Lippe’s] entire production is adapted to use[.],. is not... experimental, [but] rather obvious[,] trustworthy and simple[.],. [his products] also contain a critique of modernism.”: Fredrik Wildhagen, *Norge i Form—Kunsthåndverk og design under industrikulturen* (Oslo: J.M. Stenersen, 1988) p 98 (“Hele hans produksjon er tilpasset bruk... er ikke... eksperimentelle, snarere selvfølgelig... tilforlatelige og enkle... ligger det også en kritikk av modernismen i dem.”)

65. The avant-garde Modernists’ aversion to ornament was in fact more rhetoric than real—their ornamentation was just of a different nature as it did away with the conventional, traditional, historicist or naturalistic approaches to ornamentation. Interesting analysis of this phenomenon is found in: Brolin, *op.cit.* p 167-222 and Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Ornament* (London: Studio Vista, 1990) p 111-158

66. Anne Britt Ylvisåker, “How About Stew on Red Roses?” in Nina Malterud and Anne Britt Ylvisåker (eds.), *Burning Point Bergen—Ceramics 1950-2000* (Bergen: Kunsthøgskolen i Bergen and Vestlandske Kunsthøgskolen, 2002) p 26

5.5 “Decor in our time”

The problems regarding decor and its place in modern design made for one of the most heated debates of the 1940s. The official attitude of *Bonytt* was that it was a problematic theme, but decor *per se* was not considered incompatible with the notion of functionalism:

But so often before it has been so, concerning innovation, that first, the form must be prepared, then the decor can be introduced. Form can be produced systematically through analysis, it can be composed altogether logically... Creating suitable decor, on the other hand, demands indisputable talent... A mere five years ago, the question of decor in applied art... would have been rejected straight away by any modern designer. Decoration was old-fashioned, and that was the end of it. But the fact remains that decor has the public's heart. And with knowledge of this, we [seek]... to find a contemporary decor.⁶⁷

One might of course ask who's heart it really was that belonged to decor; the public's, or the authors'. More interesting, though, is that the design of form is here presented as something closely related to science and engineering, and thus something the modern world was highly capable of dealing with. Decor, on the other hand, is regarded as art. And though this art is fully accepted—it is even desired and advertised for—the modern world was deemed insufficiently developed at this stage.

As already mentioned, the question of decor had been something of a pebble in the shoe of modern design ideology for a long time. At least ever since Hermann Muthesius' criticism of the ornamental aspects of the Jugendstil in his book *Stilarchitektur und Baukunst* from 1902 and Adolf Loos' legendary essay *Ornament und Verbrechen* first appeared in 1908, this topic had been a troublesome subject in modernist design ideology throughout Europe.⁶⁸ The subsequent ambivalence towards ornament is hardly surprising given the remarkable communicative efficiency and versatility of ornament as a design feature/practice. Ornament can receive and convey a vast array of meanings and values, tailored to any occasion, context, market or audience by means of combinations or modifications of formal elements containing already known but flexible meanings. In short, ornament is a very rich language which is easy to write and easy to read. Since it is such an effective tool in design communication, it is no wonder, then, that it is being applied, manipulated, exploited and controlled by industrial and marketing actors. But why did the debate on ornament gain such currency in the Norwegian applied art community as late as in the 1940s? British design historian Jonathan M. Woodham has made an argument which may offer an explanation:

Throughout the [twentieth] century ornament and decoration have been used by

67. N.N., “Redaksjonens kommentar til årgangen 1942” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 220 (“Men det har så ofte før vært slik ved nyskaping at formen først må klargjøres, så kan dekoren komme inn. Form kan lages etter system gjennom analyse, den kan bygges opp rent logisk... For å skape fullverdig dekor derimot, kreves ubestridelig talent... For bare fem år siden vilde spørsmålet dekor i brukskunsten... uten videre blitt avvist av enhver moderne brukskunstner. Dekor var gammeldags, ferdig med det. Men dekor har no engang publikums hjerte. Og med viten om dette [søker] vi... å finne fram til en nutidig dekor.”)

68. Muthesius, *op.cit.* and Adolf Loos, “Ornament und Verbrechen” [1908], translated and reprinted in Adolf Loos, *Ornament and crime: selected essays* (Riverside, Ca.: Ariadne Press, 1998)

manufacturers and designers as tools to boost the sales of many mass-produced consumer products—for example, in the field of domestic appliances. An increasingly wide range of these domestic aids has been taken for granted as part of consumer life; as their functional benefits have been absorbed into the everyday routine, so their ornamental and decorative features have become increasingly important considerations in their purchase.⁶⁹

The majority of the Norwegian applied art community at this time was predominantly concerned with the design of highly familiar and domestic product types, and it thus seems plausible that this fact instigated their interest in and acknowledgment of ornament as a potent and present, but at the same time problematic—from a modernist ethic stance—aspect of design. Had the primary interest of these actors been the design of e.g. agricultural machines or medical equipment rather than furniture and tableware, ornament might not have been much of an issue.

Under the heading “Decor in our time”, Jens von der Lippe—now made co-editor of *Bonytt*—invited to a debate on this subject. He started out by defining decor as the “playground for the designer’s surplus” and the ornamentation as the expression of an entire period’s “spirit, its mentality [and] characteristics”. But it was easier in the past: “Then, decor *emerged* by itself, so to speak... Either as magic, symbolism... or... as a sort of fashion.”⁷⁰ Von der Lippe’s historical mysticism aside, his point was that no such magic or sufficiently powerful ornamental avant-garde had appeared in our time:

The problem is that now, we are done with imitations, they no longer appeal to us, and have also been substituted in the fields of form, colour and materiality [where] we have found something new which is our own to build upon... We wish to find our own decor like we have found our own form, and not borrow from other times.⁷¹

So, according to von der Lippe, it was absolutely necessary to find a “decor our time”, a modernist decor that would, in time, be the 20th century’s equivalent to e.g. renaissance or rococo ornamentation. But as of yet, there was no basis for claiming the existence of a consistent and harmonized modernist ornamentation. Von der Lippe saw three different tendencies in contemporary decor; figure- or image representation (conventionalized), leaves and flowers (more or less naturalistic), and dots and stripes (abstract). But he had no ready answer as to which path to follow in the quest for a modernist decor.

The debate which followed von der Lippe’s article clearly illustrates how difficult this theme was and how diverse the different opinions within the applied art movement were. The first debater out was the painter Henrik Sørensen, who had been a board member of the then nascent Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) 25 years earlier. He believed the unadorned modernist abstract aesthetic in applied art to be a “drowsiness in

69. Woodham, *op.cit.* p 7-8

70. Jens von der Lippe, “Dekor i vår tid” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 129-132 (“Tomlelassen for overskuddet hos brukskunstneren ... ånd, mentalitet [og] særpreg ... Da oppstod dekor av seg selv så å si... Enten som magi, symbolikk... eller... som en slags mote.”)

71. *Ibid.* p 132-133 (“Problemet er det at no er vi ferdige med etterlikninger, de tiltaler oss ikke lenger, og er også blitt skiftet ut på formens, fargens og materialvirkningens områder [hvor] vi har funnet noe nytt som er vårt eget å bygge på... Vi vil finne vår egen dekor slik som vi har funnet vår egen form, og ikke låne fra andre tider.”)

gray and beige” and asked: “When will the redeemer of our applied folk art come? When will the Nordraak, Grieg and Gerhard Munthe of decoration come?”⁷²

This traditionalist view received support from the architect Arnstein Arneberg who said that “We in this country have good traditions that are not to be disdained” and these traditions could form the basis of a new ornamentation. Contrary to Sørensen, however, Arneberg had nothing but respect for the modernist abstract aesthetic. The problem with this was just the inadequately developed public culture: “a highly cultured taste is required in order to understand a pure line and an undistorted surface”.⁷³

Interior architect and furniture designer Alf Sture shared Arneberg’s view on the inadequately developed public taste, but did not second the giving in to “good” decoration as a second-best solution to the perceived public demand for ornament: “No!—no details before the sense of the shape as a whole is sufficiently developed so that the public does not allow itself to be swindled by conspicuous gambols.”⁷⁴ As such, he is the only debater to take somewhat of a *Loosian* stand on ornament—perhaps joined by the painter and co-editor of *Bonytt*, Håkon Stenstadvold who claimed that modernist design based on factors like functionality, economy and utility “in fact excludes decoration” because it does not have any function.⁷⁵ Art for art’s sake was the domain of fine art, and his view was that if we were to find a decor for our time, it would have to be in the form of using utensils or buildings as a canvas for fine art.

But the latter attitude was not widespread. The architect, designer, painter and lecturer at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) Arne E. Holm,⁷⁶ for instance, put it quite directly: “A bowl shall be a bowl, and not a painting. A table shall not be a painting on four legs.” He did not oppose the use of decoration *per se*, but urged for care and caution and advocated the use of “simple elements like lines, dots and panels, which underscore the material and formal harmony of the objects.”⁷⁷ Another rather purist attitude towards ornamentation was expressed by the director of the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo), art historian Thor B. Kielland. He wrote that, in modernist design, it is normally “the surface treatment itself which constitute the decorative element, by emphasizing the material structure” and that also “the objects’ construction is to a great extent exposed and exploited as decorative element.”⁷⁸

72. Henrik Sørensen, “Mere dekor” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 156 (“døseri i grått og beige... Når kommer forløseren av vår folkekunst anvendt? Når kommer dekorens Nordraak, Grieg og Gerhard Munthe?”)

73. Arnstein Arneberg, “Mere dekor” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 158 (“Her i landet har vi gode tradisjoner som ikke er å forakte ...det skal høyt kultivert smak til for å forstå en ren linje og en ubrutt flate”)

74. Alf Sture, “Mere dekor” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 158 (“Nei!—ingen detaljer før sansen for den hele form er så pass opparbeidet at publikum ikke lar seg snyte av iøynefallende krumspring.”)

75. Håkon Stenstadvold, “Mere dekor” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 156 (“utelukker faktisk dekoren”)

76. Arne E. Holm was an architect by training, but as a practitioner he worked within art and design. From 1938 to 1947 he was a lecturer of design theory at SHKS, and from 1947 to 1979 he was professor at his *alma mater*, the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges tekniske høgskole—NTH): Gunnarsjaa, *op.cit.* p 343

77. Arne E. Holm, “Mere dekor” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 157 (“En skål skal være en skål, og ikke et bilde. Et bord skal ikke være et bilde på fire bein... enkle elementer som linjer, punkter og felter, som understreker tingenes stofflige og formmessige harmoni.”)

78. Thor B. Kielland, “Mere dekor” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 159 (“selve overflatebehandlingen som... utgjør det dekorative element... gjenstandenes konstruksjon blottlegges og utnyttes som dekorativt element.”)

This partiality to non-figurative ornamentation was approved of by a large number of influential actors within the applied art movement and can be identified as probably the least contested ornamental trajectory in the post-war era. But still, there were strong forces speaking up for figurative decoration as well. Hadeland's glass designer Sverre Pettersen wrote that, especially here in the Nordic region,

[w]e need decor and we need happy, cheerful colours, and why should we not grasp the motives where we find them. In our own folk art and readily in previous and foreign styles. That has been done in all times. *All progress is based on plagiarism.* We must only transform the motives in our picture—in our spirit, just like our old, lovely *peasant-rococo* was replanted on Norwegian ground based on the French.⁷⁹

As we see, two of the three different tendencies von der Lippe had identified in contemporary decor—conventionalized figurative representation and abstract non-figurative decor—both had their followers in the applied art movement. The only tendency that no one explicitly advocated was naturalistic ornamentation—even the “leaves and flowers”, as von der Lippe put it, had to be conventionalized in order to become acceptable.

This diversity of expressions and attitudes was explained by Pettersen as a result of the fact that “[i]n our classless era there are no kings, aristocracy or clergy who influence the existence and create style epochs.”⁸⁰ With the benefit of hindsight, it is quite easy to prove Pettersen wrong—it was Pettersen himself and his colleagues in the applied art movement who constituted—if not the kings and aristocracy—then certainly the clergy forming and transforming the modernist design in Norway.

5.6 Mixing oil and water? Reconciling craft and industry

Many, if not most of the *Bonytt* writers had a rather unresolved or uneasy attitude towards systems and structures of manufacture. One of these was the beforementioned Jens von der Lippe, studio ceramist and lecturer at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS). Not surprisingly, given his own practice and teaching post, von der Lippe often argued for the supremacy of studio ceramics over factory production, based on arguments such as superior manufacturing flexibility and artistic quality. And much like the creed had once been at the Deutcher Werkbund and at the Bauhaus' Weimar period, he believed that industrial production could only be improved by engaging artists, and stated that several Norwegian factories

79. Sverre Pettersen, “Mere dekor” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 157 (“[v]i trenger dekor og vi trenger glade, muntre farger, og hvorfor skal vi ikke ta motivene der vi finner dem. I vår egen folkekunst og gjerne i tidligere og fremmede stilarter. Det er noe man har gjort i alle dager. *Alt fremskritt er basert på plagiat.* Vi må bare omskape motivene i vårt bilde—i vår ånd på samme måten som den gamle, herlige bonderokokkoen vår ble omplantet på norsk grunn etter den franske.”)

80. *Ibid.* (“[i] vår klasseløse tid er det ingen konger, adel eller geistlighet som setter sitt preg på tilværet og skaper stilepoker.”)

now had realized the expertise and quality artists—in this case ceramists—could contribute with.⁸¹ However, a disturbingly large share of modern industrial manufacturers had still not, according to von der Lippe, sufficiently realized the necessity of hiring

a creative artist who gives his distinctive character to the objects, not people who are primarily businessmen, and first of all the machine must be subjected to aesthetic demands, not the other way around! But how do they work, these factories who believe they can do without the artistic element in their production, which paths do they follow in the development of their models? It is primarily the broad path!—That which leads to perdition, as the Scripture says.⁸²

The artisan-craftsman von der Lippe turns the avant-garde modernist genuflection to the machine as aesthetic inspiration and formal denominator completely upside down. The machine's only relevance to the artist should be in the capacity of a tool for aesthetic expression. It is also interesting to observe that von der Lippe himself makes use of the religious metaphors which so easily and appropriately lend themselves to our historical analysis when he condemns artist-less factories to eternal agony.

Editor Arne Remlov, on the other hand, warned against the prejudice that craft production by definition resulted in superior quality compared to factory production. The insufficient quality of many industrially produced objects was, in his opinion, not a consequence of the manufacturing system, but resulted from management deficiencies—the failure to use adequately skilled staff and the lack of design expertise.⁸³

In 1942, Remlov assumed the title of editor in chief, while two of the more frequently contributing writers, the painter Håkon Stenstadvold and Jens von der Lippe, joined Per Tannum as co-editors.⁸⁴ Remlov continued his quest for a closer collaboration between aesthetically educated professionals, such as architects and artists, and the world of production. He applauded initiatives such as the competitions arranged by the furniture business and the Oslo Trade and Industry Association's (Oslo Håndverks- og Industriforening) lottery exhibitions, but was not convinced of the comprehensiveness of this trend:

Does this desire apply to the furniture manufactures as a whole, or are there merely a few craftsmen in our capital who will actively go in for such a cooperation?... We still need to get the major manufacturers to follow the idea of collaboration.⁸⁵

81. Jens von der Lippe, "Keramikk" in *Bo-nytt*, No. 2, 1941, p 10

82. Jens von der Lippe, "Personlighet og standard" in *Bo-nytt*, No. 8, 1941, p 8 ("en skapende kunstner som setter sitt preg på tingene, ikke folk som i første rekke er business-menn, og først og fremst må maskinen innordnes etter estetiske krav, ikke omvendt! Men hvordan arbeider disse fabrikkene som mener å kunne undvære det kunstneriske innslag i sin produksjon, hvilke veier er det de følger for å finne frem til sine modeller? Det er først og fremst den brede vei!—Den som fører til fortapelsen, som skrevet står.")

83. Arne Remlov, "Stoppende møbler" in *Bo-nytt*, No. 3, 1941, p 13

84. From 1945, they were joined by architect Bernt Heiberg, whereas Tannum left the editorial board in 1947.

85. Arne Remlov, "Arkitekt og Snekkermester i samarbeid" in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 1-5 ("Gjelder dette ønsket for møbelprodusentene i sin helhet, eller er det bare noen hovedstadshåndverkere som vil gå aktivt inn for å etablere et slikt samarbeid?... Så gjenstår det å få de store produsentene til å følge idéen om samarbeid.")

Remlov seemed rather content with the more experimental production, progressive attitude and contemporary formal language expressed by artisans and craftsmen, but the sphere of industrial production, at least in the furniture industry, was in all essentiality absent at all the initiatives and events organized and promoted by the applied art movement. This fact was seen a major challenge, because herein lay the greatest potential for improvement, and the industry was definitely seen as a desirable allied. As Interior designer Liv Schjødt put it: “the factories should consider it their responsibility to take up the new impulses and take part in educating people”.⁸⁶

In an article on the ceramic industry in the Rogaland district, architect and city planning officer Harald Hals discussed the differences between handicraft and factory production, and how this affect the character of the products. He pointed to the advantage the factories have, resulting from their superior size and financial resources, in terms of better access to technological facilities and opportunities of experimenting. It is interesting, but perhaps not surprising, to observe how the architect Hals’ opinions on ceramics and the relations between handicraft and industrial production differs from those of the studio ceramist von der Lippe. Nevertheless, Hals is in complete agreement with von der Lippe regarding the importance of securing artistically competent design management in the factories.⁸⁷

The factories Hals referred to, were Egersunds Fayancefabrik, Ganns Potteri og Teglverk, and Graverens Tegleverk.⁸⁸ The former was an industrially organized earthenware factory dating back to 1847 and employing several hundred persons. The latter two, however, were regarded factories more in terms of scale and organization than in terms of manufacturing technology. In his assessment of their production, Hals drew attention to one man in particular:

Among the ceramists in Rogaland, [Ragnar] Grimsrud has in several respects become the leading. His fortitude is primarily his sense of form, which—matched with a profound need for finding objective solutions to the problems which arise—has resulted in many surprising and usually very convincing results.⁸⁹

Grimsrud’s designs for Graverens are also well represented in the illustrations to Hals’ article [Figure 5-3]. His presence is even greater than the author knew, as the article featured a photo of the *Åsa* service that Grimsrud designed during his one-year stint at Egersund Fayancefabrik in 1933-34, which Hals wrongly attributed to the decor designer, Anker Olsen.⁹⁰

86. Liv Schjødt, “Fabrikken lager våre møbler” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 149 (“fabrikkene burde føle det som en oppgave å oppta de nye impulser og være med å oppdra folk”)

87. Harald Hals, “Keramikk i Rogaland” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 130

88. Figgjo Kraftselskap A/S—Keramikkfabrikk had been founded as recently as 1941 and its production and distribution was extremely limited at this point. It is thus no surprise that Hals does not mention Figgjo, nor that it is not mentioned two years later either in: Karl Teigen, “Har norsk keramikk tradisjon?” in *Bo-nytt*, No. 2, 1944, p 38-46

89. Hals, *op.cit.* p 131 (“Blant keramikkerne i Rogaland har [Ragnar] Grimsrud på flere måter kommet til å bli den ledende. Hans styrke ligger først og fremst i hans formsans, som—parret med en dyp trang til å finne fram til saklige løsninger på de problemene som melder seg—har ført til mange overraskende og oftest meget overbevisende resultater.”)

90. *Ibid.* p 128



Figure 5–3: Photographs illustrating Harald Hals’ article on Rogaland Ceramics in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942. Top left: Tea service (pottery) Graverens, late 1930s. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Top right: Various objects (pottery) Graverens, 1937. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Bottom: Tea service (pottery) Ganns, late 1930s. Designer: Arne Jørgensen.

Hals’ enthusiastic and positive attitude towards the improvements the recent work of the more industrialized ceramic factories represented was not just an isolated, dissenting opinion. In the presentation of one of his own interior designs for a two bedroom apartment, Arne Remlov shows a similar optimism regarding the design development of domestic factory production:

It is well known that our furniture factories until recently have dared little in furthering a healthier and more contemporary design of their models. Now, these very last few years, however, it seems like the different conditions, like e.g. precisely the shortage of materials and the profitable sales situation, combined with the widespread propaganda for a more

modern interior design, have resulted in a greater interest among the manufacturers to go for new models with relatively low material consumption, away from the phoney “hits” or “sellers”, most frequently represented by renaissance and baroque bastards and other corruptions.⁹¹

Remlov very carefully pointed out that all the furniture used in this apartment was mass-produced by Norwegian factories. It might seem peculiar that he partially attributes the in his eyes positive development of product design to one of the otherwise detested and troublesome consequences of the war, i.e. the shortage of materials. In fact, the sociologist Kjetil Rolness has even suggested that the design professionals *enjoyed* and *appreciated* the material shortages, as it supposedly made it easier to promote their aesthetics of reduction.⁹² Remlov’s arguments here might seem to support Rolness’ hypothesis, but—as will be demonstrated later—documentation of the joys expressed when the situation improved from the early 1950s repudiates any such assertion. So I believe Remlov’s curious remark on the matter should probably be interpreted as an attempt at positive thinking in difficult times, or as an attitude of desperate times, desperate measures. Note also that he took the opportunity of patting himself and the rest of the applied art movement on the shoulder by giving this community much of the credit for the improving awareness.

Remlov also touched on the subject of national distinctions in modernist design:

We have, quite correctly, not yet quite arrived at the point where we have achieved a domestic, Norwegian feel to our new furniture—I do not mean the basic shapes; they are more or less international—but it especially concerns detailing and the choice and processing of materials. However, we need not fear anything in this respect. Now, like in the past, the national characteristics will make their mark also on the furniture of our time. But first the purge must be completed.⁹³

Here, Remlov gives a twist to the archetypal demand so prominent in avant-garde modernist ideology and rhetoric for a complete and clean break with the past, for a *tabula rasa*. The modernist inquisition is in progress, and must be allowed to complete its purge. Only then can the parishioners request reformed churches and denominations with local accents and catechisms in their native tongue. But rest assured; even modern design will be domesticated.

91. Arne Remlov, “Nåtidig innredning med seriemøbler” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 132-133 (“Det er en kjent sak at våre møbelfabrikker inntil den seneste tid har våget lite for å fremme en sunnere og mer nåtidige utforming av sine modeller. Nå, i de aller siste årene, ser det imidlertid ut til at de forskjellige forhold som for eksempel nettopp materialknappheten og de gode omsetningsforhold ved siden av den utstrakte propaganda for en mer tidsmessig hjeminnredning, har forårsaket at fabrikantene har fått større interesse for å gå inn for nye modeller med relativt lite materialforbruk, bort fra de forlorne “publikumstreffere” og “selgere”, sterkest representert ved renessanse- og barokk-bastarder og annen uhumskhet.”)

92. Kjetil Rolness, *Med smak skal hjemmet bygges—innredning av det moderne norge* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995) p 104

93. Remlov, *op.cit.* (“Vi har ganske riktig ikke nådd helt dithen at vi har oppnådd en hjemlig, norsk tone over våre nye møbler—ikke mener jeg grunnformene, de er mer eller mindre internasjonale—men det gjelder særlig detaljering og materialvalg og behandling. Vi trenger imidlertid ikke frykte noe på dette punkt. Nå som før vil den nasjonale egenart sette sitt preg også på vår tids møbler. Men opprensningen må først være fullbrakt.”)

Towards the end of the war, extensive bewilderment as to what the future would bring spread rapidly. These sentiments were expressed also in the columns of *Bonytt*. The author Haakon Bugge Mahrt uttered his concern regarding the role of Europe in the future world of material culture. “Is it recovery or decline that awaits our continent, is it a new position of leadership or decadence and annihilation?”⁹⁴ He saw the extremely rapid and comprehensive industrialization of the USA, the USSR and Japan as a huge menace and challenge to Europe and its economy, politics, society and culture. He expected—not erroneously, we might say in retrospect—that these new industrial powers would come to dominate the manufacturing of goods in the foreseeable future, and thus obliterate Europe’s position as *the workshop of the world*. Europe could not compete with the low wages and production costs of the Asian economies, and could not master the scale required to match American mass-production. Bugge Mahrt could not see any easy solution, but the cultural traditions would become essential also in the future:

[Europe] must at any cost seek to retain its position as the brain of the world, maintain its reputation for quality and finesse, assert itself against both the American mass-production and the underprices of the East... Europe’s greatest privilege [is] the personality, the good taste, the prestige of the elite, the plurality of styles and ways of life.⁹⁵

Bugge Mahrt’s statements must be understood in light of him being an emphatically modernist author and a professed *homo europæus*.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, this is an extremely elitist and arrogant attitude; only the refined minds of the old world could possibly design products of good taste. What is more interesting is that this elitism was suggested as the guiding principle of European design. Quite far from the sociodemocratic values normally attributed to European post-war design, to say the least.

Bugge Mahrt’s reflections on the challenges represented by the world’s new industrial centres of gravity are fascinating by virtue of their being published as early as December 1944. The tremendous increases in the manufacturing of goods and standards of living in Europe the following two decades might of course be seen as proving his anxiety groundless, but considering the developments of the 1970s and 1980s, his anxiety was at worst somewhat premature.

When contemplating on what was seen as the inevitable forthcoming mechanization and industrialization of the manufacturing of goods in the post war era, this development was not uncritically welcomed as the path towards salvation. The possibilities offered by

94. Haakon Bugge Mahrt, “Mot en ny etterkrig” in *Bo-nytt*, No. 4, 1944, p 100 (“Er det oppgang eller nedgang som venter vår verdensdel, er det ny lederstilling eller dekadens og utslettelse?”)

95. *Ibid.* p 101 (“[Europa] må for enhver pris søke å beholde sin posisjon som verdens hjerne, opprettholde sitt ry for kvalitet og finesse, hevde seg mot både den amerikanske serieproduksjon og østens underpriser... Europas største privilegium [er] personligheten, den gode smak, elitens prestige, mangfoldigheten i stilarter og livsformer.”)

96. Petter Aaslestad, “En utpreget modernist. Haakon Bugge Mahrt som skjønnlitterær forfatter” in Sissel Furuseth, Sarah J. Paulson and Petter Aaslestad (eds.), *Saklighet og sanselighet. Norsk prosa-modernisme på 1930-tallet* (Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk, 2000) p 35-50. Tellingly, Bugge Mahrt’s first two books were called: *Modernism (Modernisme)* and *Dear Europe (Kjære Europa)*: Haakon Bugge Mahrt, *Modernisme* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1931) and Haakon Bugge Mahrt, *Kjære Europa: to fortellinger* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1932)

the advances in the utilization of machines and by the organizational reforms in the industry was regarded important measures and helpful aids in the quest for more rational production and better products, but this development was at the same time regarded as potentially harmful:

[A]s the machines gradually take over the craft's role in production, they can easily mark it. Giving the objects a human character will become a problem sooner or later. Then it is absolutely essential that the designer does not let himself get carried away by machines and technology, technology is the means and not the goal.⁹⁷

So, even though there was a great deal of fascination for and interest in mechanized and industrialized production, it was no prostrating admiration. The scepticism regarding mechanization and industrialization was widespread and the love for and trust in craft-based production and the artisan culture was still very much present. For example, Arne Remlov reported from the Swedish experiments with knock-down furniture with great enthusiasm regarding their potential benefits in terms of rational production, storage and shipping, but still asked

“Can the [knock-down] furniture become as durable... and... as beautiful? Will they not become too heavily marked by their construction—giving them an overly “ready-made” feel...?”⁹⁸

In short; Remlov was worried that products might become *too* “functionalistic” in the sense that a form which revealed or reflected the object's construction *too much* was likely to be of inferior aesthetic quality. This attitude borders on formalism. Moreover, it also expresses an elitism which considers “off the rack” products manufactured in a factory by means of industrialized production processes to be inferior to handicraft.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter started out with a little excursion into the history of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art's (Landsforeningen norsk brukskunst) predecessor, the Applied Art Association (Foreningen brukskunst) established in 1918, showing how the major organisational and ideological constellations in the design community of 1940s' Norway were deeply rooted in the applied art movement dating back to the late 19th and early 20th century. This heritage would prove to be both influential and troublesome in the design community's domestication of ideology, as we shall see in later chapters.

97. Arne E. Holm, “Noen ord om boligkultur” in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 3 (“[E]tter hvert som maskinene overtar håndverkets rolle i produksjonen vil de ha lett for å prege den. Det å gi gjenstandene en human karakter vil bli et problem som før eller siden melder seg. Da er det først og fremst om å gjøre at brukskunstneren ikke lar seg beruse av maskiner og teknikk, teknikken er midlet og ikke målet.”)

98. Arne Remlov, “Paketmøbler” in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 34 (“Kan møblene bli like holdbare... og like pene? Vil de ikke bli for sterkt preget av konstruksjonen—slik at de får så utpreget “konfeksjonspreg”...?”)

After a brief presentation of the founders and editors of *Bonytt*, their programme was analysed in some detail, clarifying the ambition and agenda of this new publication. It was to become the first Norwegian specialized magazine for interior design and applied art, functioning both as “a voice from professional to layman” and as an arena for debate among design professionals.⁹⁹ *Bonytt* became a vigorous promoter of modern design, but the many voices of caution, moderation and adaption in the discussion on modernist design ideals hardly made for an avant-garde environment.

Given that *Bonytt* was launched in a Norway occupied by nazi Germany, it is hardly surprising that political underpinnings and overtones of modernist design were kept at a minimum during the war. One of the strategies in this attempted neutralisation was to portray the central tenet of modernism, the functionalist ethos, as an apolitical and ahistorical truth. Less of a political controversy, but even more of a conundrum within a design community raised on modernist ideals, the discussion on “decor in our time” generated much fervour and comprised attitudes ranging from austere asceticism to positivistic playfulness. The last theme investigated in this chapter pertained to the emerging debate on manufacturing systems and their relation to design professions and processes. The first take on this recurring discussion regarded primarily the relationship between craft and industry, focusing on the different nature and properties of design and production processes in such (more or less) contrasting settings. The next chapter will examine the more conscious efforts at constructing design discourse, particularly in the new situation after the war.

99. Tannum and Remlov, *op.cit.* (“et organ fra fagmann til legmann”)

6 Forming a field, shaping a society: Design discourse and postwar reconstruction

6.1 Introduction

In many ways, the war years were a period of suspense, of making do while waiting for some sort of normality to be reinstated. How did the design community and the design professions position themselves in the immediate postwar period? What was done to create a design discourse in tune with the new societal circumstances? How did they relate to the massive focus on reconstruction? Concentrating chiefly on the first postwar years, this chapter will examine how the design community emerged from the wartime state of irregularity to more consciously and eagerly began forming their field as well as contributing to the shaping of society.

As already mentioned, the *Bonytt* writers and most of their colleagues in the Norwegian design community were decidedly modernists by general conviction, although they were by no means uncritical of the avant-garde modernism as formulated in interwar continental Europe. This chapter starts out by exploring some of the early discussions on how the basic principles of modernism should be transformed and adapted to a Norwegian postwar setting. The international avant-garde modernism, often considered rather stark, cold and inhuman, had to be appropriated or domesticated in order to be acceptable and befitting, leading to various efforts at putting a human face on modernism.

The term “industrial design” appeared for the first time in *Bonytt* in 1945, and following a greater awareness of this phenomenon as a distinct field and profession, representatives of the established design professions engaged in a debate that might be described as a battle for hegemony over who is the better designer for industry. The end of the war also meant freedom to travel, and the design community seized the opportunity, gathering new impressions and aiming towards new horizons.

Reconstruction became the all-important task in the early postwar years. The country had to be rebuilt, both in the most physical and literal meaning as well as in the more figurative and ideological sense. The design community realised that their field had to be aligned with this massive communal spirit in to avoid being marginalised and classified as inessential. Even the prime minister appealed to the moral responsibility and social vocation of the designers, requesting their participation in the reconstruction.

The ongoing concern with developments in manufacturing systems in the modern industrialised society resurfaced, this time as a debate on whether mass-production represented a marvel or a malady. At this stage, the subject was treated with much ambiguity, but the prospect of American-type large-scale industrial mass-production in Norway would remain somewhat of a uneasy thought for a long time, at least among the applied art fraction of the design community.

In closing, a short stop will be made at the Stavanger Applied Art Association (Stavanger Brukskunstforening), the local chapter of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen norsk brukskunst) established in 1946 in the wake of the reorganisation of the latter. Both through geographical realities and personal affiliations, the Stavanger chapter would be the closest link between the national design community and Figgjo.

6.2 Putting a human face on modernism

In their efforts in promoting modern design, the brokers in the Norwegian design community acted more as transformers than as transmitters. In other words; the *Bonytt* writers did not just try to spread the gospel of international modernism. In fact, they were highly critical to the interwar avantgarde modernism, which was often characterized as cold, stark and inhuman—although the basic ideas were largely endorsed. Thus, their task became not to *transmit* modernism, but to *transform* modernism.¹ In order to work in a local context, modernism had to be domesticated. One of the primary strategies was to put a human face on modernism.

The critical attitude towards modernism did not, however, entail any tolerance of the Beast known as historicism. *Bonytt* co-editor Per Tannum vented his anger and frustration regarding the persistence of historicism in Norwegian design, and how this domain was lagging behind other spheres of society:

We here in Norway have now come a long way in many areas. Our hygiene is better than ever. We dress appropriately. Homes become ever brighter, airier and more rational—however somewhat small... Only on one field are many of us very old-fashioned, and that is when we equip our modern houses... [I]t is up to each and every one of us to decide whether this “self-deception” shall continue, or if the modern development shall be admitted also on this field.²

So, modern design was portrayed as the equivalent to good hygiene, appropriateness, brightness, airiness, and rationality. Who in their right mind could possibly resist salvation when the missionaries merge logic (rationality), morals (hygiene and appropriateness), and joy (brightness and airiness)? Quite many, as it turned out. Even the editors seem to have realized that the serenity and austerity they promoted could be perceived by the readers as too extreme. So, softer and more popular opinions were also voiced in *Bonytt*. For example, architect Bernt Heiberg introduced a notion of an object’s emotional function juxtaposed to its utilitarian function:

1. They were, as Bruno Latour would put it, not *intermediaries*, but *mediators*: Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social—An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) p 39
2. Per Tannum, “Renessansens riddere” in *Bo-nytt*, No. 3, 1941, p 16 (“Vi her i Norge har kommet langt på mange områder. Vår hygiene er bedre enn noen gang. Vi kler oss hensiktsmessig. Boligene blir stadig lysere, luftigere og mer rasjonelle—om enn noe små... Kun på ett område står mange av oss langt tilbake i tiden, og det er når vi utstyret våre moderne hus... [D]et er hver enkelt av oss som avgjør hvorvidt “selvbedraget” skal fortsette, eller om den moderne utvikling også på dette område skal få slippe til.”)

We do not discuss whether or not it is aesthetically justifiable to combine new and old things, mixing oak, birch and mahogany, fine and meagre furniture. All that which serves a reasonable purpose for the inhabitants, be that practical or emotional, can justify its place.³

Heiberg's legitimatizing of emotional needs and including them in—even juxtaposing them to—the concept of function definitively sheds new light on our at times stereotyped conception of functionalism. But even more extreme concession were made: The sculptor Arne Durban-Hansen, who had originally trained as a furniture designer,⁴ advocated the legitimacy of ornamental figurines:

The modern homes might to a certain degree be arranged by Corbusier's famous definition: "A machine to live in". But for this machine to run smoothly, it is simply essential to have things that are not essential—like a figurine or two... The modern furniture in its severe and simple matter-of-factness needs such a little exhilarating aspect to give the interior the little spark of humanity and warmth which is required.⁵

However, he stressed that also regarding figurines, the question of quality in material, execution and aesthetics was equally imperative as regarding any other item. Durban-Hansen's article was followed by a presentation of the self-designed homes of Danish architects Arne Jacobsen and Poul Henningsen—already considered big stars in the Norwegian architectural community.⁶

Whether articles like these were a result of a *de facto* diversity of opinion within the applied art movement, or rather an attempt to cater to the desires of the public is not easy to establish. The diversity of opinion was most probably greater than we are often led to believe. Nevertheless, the need to comply with the affinities of the readers should not be underestimated. The latter stand seems highly present in an editorial where Remlov wooed the readers by declaring his understanding for the fact that not everyone could or wished to give oneself up completely to contemporary design.⁷ But the continuance of tradition is only approved of if subjected to the most severe scrutiny—old items must possess modern qualities of aesthetics and usability to be accepted: "We defend the *good* things of yore when they can be used or when they can please us with their beauty".⁸

3. Bernt Heiberg interviewed in Arne Remlov, "Arkitektboliger—Noen yngre arkitekter og møbeltegnere intervjues" in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 205 ("Vi diskuterer ikke hvorvidt det er estetisk forsvarlig å stille nye og gamle ting sammen, blande eik, bjørk og mahogni, fine og tarvelige møbler. Alt det som tjener et rimelig formål for beboerne, det være seg praktisk eller følelsesmessig, kan forsvare sin plass.")

4. At the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS), 1928-1932. He then went on to study at the National Academy of Fine Art (Statens kunstakademi): Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982) p 513

5. Arne Durban-Hansen, "Artige figurer" in *Bo-nytt*, No. 7, 1941, p 9 ("De moderne hjem er nok til en viss grad innrettet efter Corbusier's berømte definisjon: "En maskin til å leve i". Men for at denne maskinen skal gå glatt, er det simpelthen nødvendig å ha ting som ikke er nødvendige—sånn som en prydfigur eller to... De moderne møbler i all sin strenge og enkle saklighet trenger et slikt lite oplivende moment til å gi interiøret den lille gnist av menneskelighet og varme som må til.")

6. N.N., "To arkitekter bygger for sig selv" in *Bo-nytt*, No. 7, 1941, p 15-18

7. Arne Remlov, Editorial in *Bo-nytt*, No. 7, 1941, p 2

8. Arne Remlov, Editorial in *Bo-nytt*, No. 8, 1941, p 28 ("Vi forsvare de *gode* tingene fra før når de kan brukes eller når de kan glede oss med sin skjønnhet.")

In an article on the alluring power of film set design, the philologist Tryggve Norum warned against the damaging effect these dreamy illusions might have on the “insufficiently developed taste of the consumers.”⁹ Based on the argument that the general public was not capable to distinguish between good and bad, he contemptuously accused those bearing false witness of functionalism and thus undermining and diminishing the true force and impetus of this ideology:

One might question whether [the consumers] are capable of distinguishing between true functionalism and its disfigured brother called *funkis*. Surely, it is not for anybody to be able to digest functionalism exactly like Le Corbusier created it. His style often seemed cold, and his predilection for the extreme produced furniture formes that taste of utopian dream of the future, and that at times sin against his own principle. But this very principle is the fundamental thought in all truly modern architecture, and it can not be repeated too often: “a chair must be the best machine to sit in, a house the best machine to live in”. Hence it does not by any means follow that a chair must look like a machine.¹⁰

Here, I will not dwell on Norum’s highly questionable notion of functionalism as one man’s creation, nor the qualitative amendment to Le Corbusier’s statement (“...the *best* machine...”). But the critique of how the principles of functionalistic ideology had been but to work in product design both by Le Corbusier himself and by other, less ideologically motivated actors turning it into style and fashion (hereof the derogatory use of the abbreviated form “*funkis*”)—is fascinating. Even more so is Norum’s acknowledgment that hard-core functionalism, here represented by Le Corbusier’s ideas and designs, was not capable of transforming the world according to the missionaries’s desires—at least not in the cultural setting of mid-century Norway. To become an effective and accepted catechism in this parish, it had to be tamed, or domesticated.

The necessity of domesticating modernist ideology seems to have been widely acknowledged in the Norwegian applied art and architecture communities. One of the many figures who linked these two communities by way of personal traits, professional interests and positions was Ove Bang. He was a reputable architect and vice president of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst)—although he died prematurely at the age of 47 in 1942.¹¹ Through his practice as an architect, he managed to convert this acknowledged necessity of domesticating modernism into substance through his buildings [Figure 6-1].¹²

9. Tryggve Norum, “Kong Salomos løibenk i Jørgen Hattemakers stue” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 17 (“kjøpernes mangelfullt utviklede smak.”)

10. *Ibid.* p 16 (“Da spør det om [kjøperne] er i stand til å skille mellom virkelig funksjonalisme og dens vanartede bror som heter *funkis*. Nå er det visseilig” ikke hvem som helst gitt å kunne fordøye funksjonalismen akkurat slik som Le Corbusier skapte den. Hans stil virket ofte kald, og hans forkjærlighet for det ekstreme fremkalte møbelformer som smaker av utopisk fremtidsdrøm, ja, som undertiden synder mot hans eget prinsipp. Men nettopp dette prinsipp er den bærende tanke i all virkelig moderne arkitektur, og det kan ikke gjentas for ofte: “en stol skal være den beste maskin til å sitte i, et hus den beste maskin til å bo i”. Derav følger slett ikke at en stol skal se ut som en maskin.”)

11. Herman Munthe-Kaas, “Minneord om Ove Bang” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 113

12. For more on Ove Bang’s architecture, see Wenche Findal, *Mellom tradisjon og modernitet—Arkitekt Ove Bang og den funksjonelle syntese* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo & Universitetsforlaget, 1998)

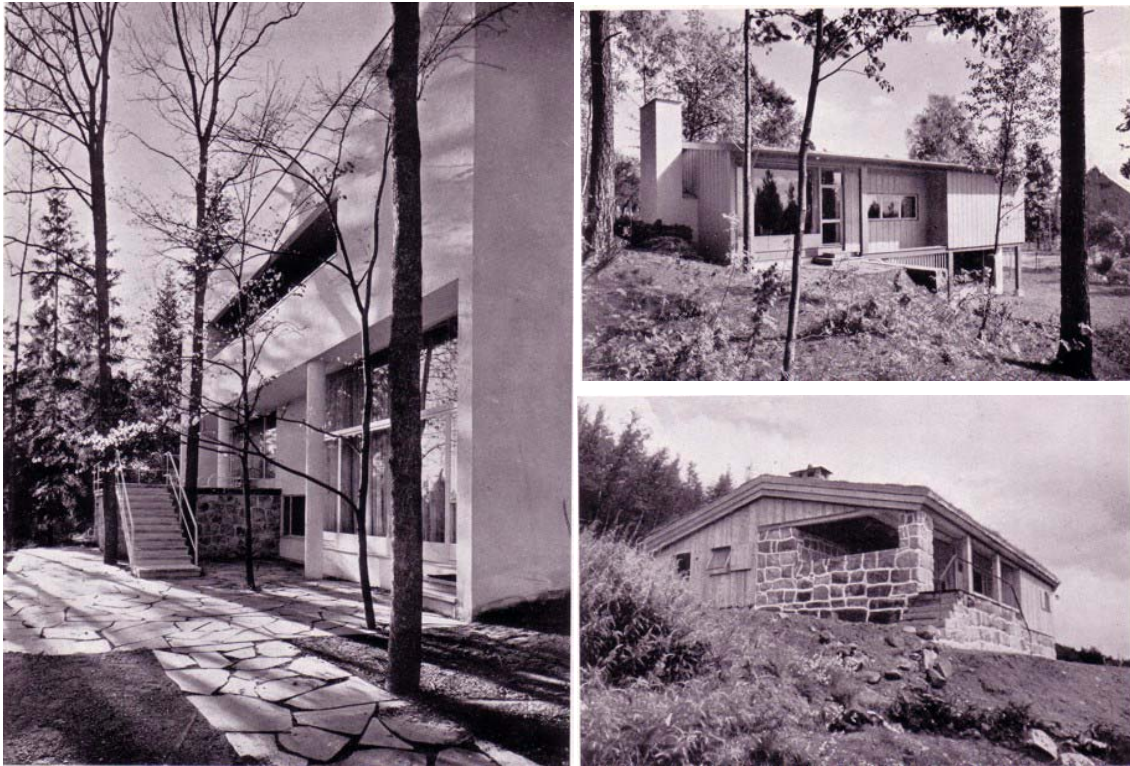


Figure 6-1: Three different levels of domesticating modernist ideology in Ove Bang’s architecture. Left: A large, luxurious villa in reinforced concrete, complete with Le Corbusier’s prescribed features such as the white exterior, the pilotis and the flat roof. The only domesticating trait is the use of natural stone in the terrace foundation wall. Top right: A small villa more adapted to local climate, materials, and constructional traditions—gable roof, framework construction, and wainscot. Bottom right: A mountain cabin firmly rooted in traditional building tradition. All three buildings are from 1937. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 2, 1942)

Hence, domestication based on both national, regional and local premises was to a certain degree both a conscious and desired phenomenon. Perhaps, due to the place-specific character of buildings, more so in the realm of architecture than within the applied art movement.¹³ Architect and city planning officer Harald Hals refused, in an article on the ceramic industry in the Rogaland district, any notions of strictly *local* characteristics regarding industrial products. Mass-produced objects, he argued, could not possibly convey any such distinctively local features, because they are made for a geographically and socially dispersed public.¹⁴

Arne Remlov’s insistence on the creativity of the designer became strikingly evident when he proclaimed that the functionalist creed of *form follows function* simply was insufficient and no guarantee for a well-designed product. Good, modern design depended heavily upon aesthetic and artistic creativity as well as upon functional usability.¹⁵ This attitude was expressed perhaps even more directly by Jens von der

13. For more on local interpretations of modernist ideology in Norwegian architecture, see e.g. Wenche Findal, “Regionale forskjeller i funksjonalismen” in Terje Forseth (ed.), *Funksjonalismen i Norge* [yearbook] (Oslo: Fortidsminneforeningen, 1992) p 23–40

14. Harald Hals, “Keramikk i Rogaland” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 129

Lippe in the editorial of an issue dedicated to the theme “Artistic values of utility articles”:

We surround ourselves with an abundance of utility articles every day, but we will find little pleasure in them if they only have their merely utilitarian values to offer us or if we do not acquire more of their inherent values than these.¹⁶

True design quality would only be achieved by an integrated, complete and successful mode of communication of artistic values from the designer’s intentions via the medium (the object) and perceived by the user. This process was also depicted by the cover illustration by Arne E. Holm [Figure 6-2].

Von der Lippe’s thoughts on the communicative aspects of artefacts become particularly interesting when seen in light of the concept of script analysis as developed by the French sociologist Madeleine Akrich. If one should hazard such a comparison, then the designer’s artistic intentions von der Lippe spoke of might be seen as part of the artefact’s *script*. These artistic intentions are *inscribed* by the designer and concretized as the “artistic values of the utility article” in the form of its *script*. But, as von der Lippe also stressed, the intentions fail to become realised as values, but remain mere intentions if they are not “acquired” by the users. In script parlance, then, one might say that the user’s perception, interpretation and cognition of these “inherent values” can be labelled (artistic) *subscription* or *de-inscription*—depending on the degree of understanding, accordance and agreement between designer/producer, object, and user.¹⁷ Admittedly, von der Lippe did not use any of these script-metaphors, but his description of the design process from intention to perception and cognition certainly shows that the knowledge of this dynamic was very much present. The main point here, though, is that von der Lippe portrayed the *artistic* intentions/values as the very essence of good design, and seemed less concerned with artefacts’ utilitarian (or other) aspects.

But this insistence on the artistic values of utility articles and the aesthetic aspect of the design process did not overturn the utilitarian aspects of design. Like the designer Arnulf Bjørshol wrote:

A good cutlery set must be comfortable and easy to use, not rigid, not *only* intended to be looked at. It may very well be handsome, but much more important is it that it *feels* good—in the hand... The hands are just as susceptible to varied impressions as the eyes... The eye is most understanding when it comes to comprehending the beauty of a form which is pleasant to touch and to use.¹⁸

15. Arne Remlov, “Det skjer noe her og” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 187

16. Jens von der Lippe, “Kunstverdier i bruksting” in *Bo-nytt*, No. 2, 1944, p 33 (“Vi omgir oss med en mangfoldighet av bruksting til daglig, men vi vil ha liten glede av dem hvis de bare har sine rene bruksmessige verdier å by oss eller hvis vi ikke tilegner oss mer av deres iboende verdier enn disse.”)

17. See e.g.: Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies” in Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (eds.), *Shaping Technology / Building Society* (London & Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) p 259-264

18. Arnulf Bjørshol, “Bestikk til å se på og bestikk til å ta i” in *Bo-nytt*, No. 2, 1944, p 62-63 (“Et godt bestikk må være ledig og lett å bruke, ikke stivt, ikke *bare* beregnet på å sees. Det kan gjerne ta seg godt ut, men langt viktigere er det at det *kjennes* godt ut—i hånden... Hendene er like mottagelige for varierte inntrykk som øynene... Øyet viser stor forståelse når det gjelder å opfatte skjønnheten i en form som er god å ta i og bruke.”)

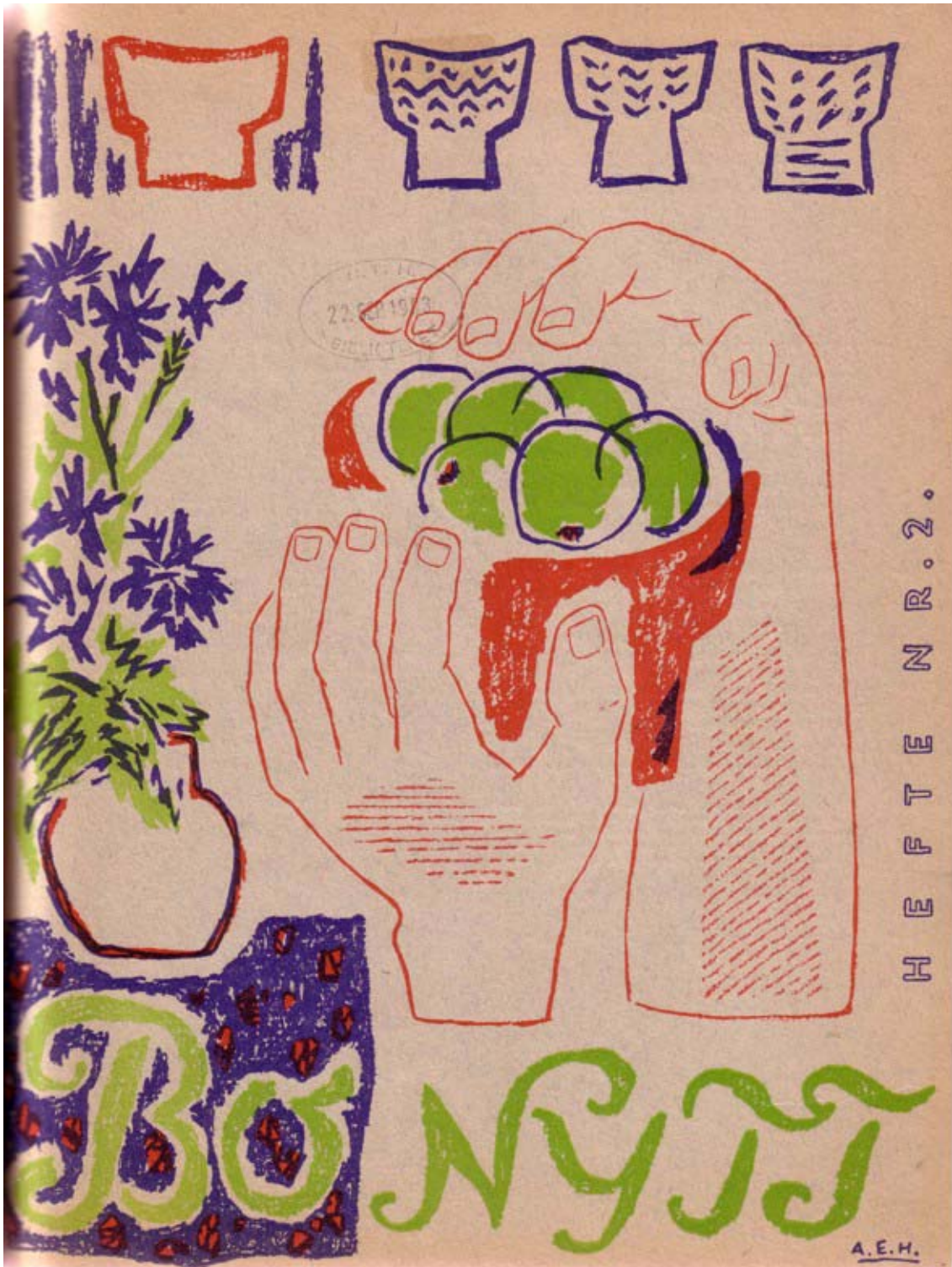


Figure 6–2: Cover of *Bo-nytt*, No.2, 1944 by Arne E. Holm illustrating the design process from intention to perception and cognition.

But not even here is the avant-garde modernist dogma *form follows function* (that is; if we here understand “function” strictly as *utilitarian* function) taken for granted. Surely,

design should strive to facilitate the utilitarian function of the object. This would greatly influence the form, and this influence would also greatly improve the chances of obtaining a good, and thus also aesthetically pleasing form. But function is not seen as dictating form. The designer must make other considerations as well, and apply e.g. artistic creativity in order to ensure the object's values beyond the utilitarian ones. The dogma seems to have been reformulated to *form follows function and artistic intentions*—and, when reading between the lines, it is tempting to add emotional needs, moral values, social duties, and several other factors to the list.

6.3 The battle for hegemony: Who is the better designer?

One of the strongest unifying forces and common impetus within the applied art movement was the quest for better manufactured goods. But who should implement these measures? In other words; who should design products for the manufacturing industry and the industrial art sector? At this stage, the term 'industrial design' had not even been introduced to the Norwegian design community. So, which professionals were better qualified for the job? Representatives of two of the Applied Art Association's dominant member groups, craft-trained designers and architects, battled it out—later joined by a third group; interior architects.

The architect Bernt Heiberg made a frontal attack on the entire Norwegian craft-based industry. His argument was based on what he perceived as a far superior level of aesthetic quality in the craft-based industries of our neighbouring countries.¹⁹ Numerous examples from Swedish and Danish craft-based industries of products resulting from a collaboration between architects and craftsmen illustrated the article. This collaboration made, according to Heiberg, for prosperous conditions. The situation in Norway, however, was deplorable:

Here, things are different. Neither silversmiths, glass works, weaving mills nor wallpaper manufacturers, not basket makers and not bookbinders seem to need assistance from outside. They are maybe so clever themselves, these our professionals, that they have little need for fresh blood? Far from it. They are not at all so inconceivably clever, not so that their achievements gleam, not so that they can compete with the neighbouring countries. Technically they may be at the same level, but formally there is a great deal lacking.²⁰

19. It should perhaps be mentioned that Heiberg's feeling of inferiority was not limited to the sphere of craft and industry, but was just as pertinent in his own field; architecture. He later blamed this on the war, claiming that Norwegian architects' lack of building experience during the war set them back five years compared to their Swedish and Danish colleagues: Bernt Heiberg interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 20.02.1998 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]

20. Bernt Heiberg, "ARKITEKTENE og brukskunsten" in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 99-100 ("Hos oss er det annerledes. Hverken sølvsmeder, glassverk, veverier eller tapetfabrikker, ikke korgmakere og ikke bokbindere synes å trenge assistanse utenfra. De er kanskje så flinke selv, disse fagfolkene våre at de har lite behov for nytt blod? Langt ifra. De er slett ikke så ubegripelig flinke, ikke slik at det står glans av deres prestasjoner, ikke slik at de kan hevde seg i konkurranse med nabolandene. Teknisk står de kanskje på høyde, men formelt mangler det meget.")

The solution to this deplorable situation was, according to Heiberg, of course to seek help in the universal aesthetic expertise of the architects. Here, he joined the age-old tradition of architects regarding architecture as the mother of all art, and themselves as universalists, as conductors. Heiberg argues that the competence of the architect—as opposed to that of other professions—was not limited to his original “domicile”, i.e. the planning and design of buildings. This supremacy of the architect was attributed to “a congenital or acquired ability to gain sympathetic insight into the presuppositions of each trade and each task”.²¹

Not surprisingly, Heiberg’s outburst was received by certain actors in the Norwegian craft-based industries as an insult and a falsity. It provoked reactions from central figures like the factory owner at Hadeland glass works, Bjarne W. Berg, and the goldsmith Ivar David-Andersen. Berg confined his answer to simply pointing out that his company both in past and present collaborated closely with both architects, craftsmen and artists, and that Heiberg’s attack therefore did not apply to him and Hadeland.²²

Ivar David-Andersen, on the other hand, picked up the glove. He strongly rejected Heiberg’s notion of the universal aptitude of architects. The provocation felt by David-Andersen was most likely much due to the fact that Heiberg had used several examples from the silversmith trade, David-Andersen’s home turf. He even took the trouble of consulting his Danish colleague Kay Bojesen—who David-Andersen accused Heiberg of quoting and interpreting erroneously—to gain leverage and credibility for his cause. He quotes the letter he had received from Bojesen:

Naturally, my statement is to be interpreted such that silverware demands such thorough knowledge of the material and such considerable trade expertise that it is extremely rare to see a well-proportioned and practical piece of silverware designed by an architect or another person who does not possess the necessary professional experience.²³

After having established this base of credibility through lending the authority of a highly regarded actor operating at the very core of the issue, David-Andersen set out to discredit Heiberg’s assertions by disparaging some of the silverware products hailed by Heiberg as exemplary. For instance, he criticised a Danish jug which had illustrated Heiberg’s article, and juxtaposed and compared this to a jug manufactured by his own company [Figure 6-3]. The jug hailed by Heiberg, designed by esteemed Danish architect and professor Kay Fisker and manufactured by Danish silversmith company A. Michelsen, was by David-Andersen characterized as formally ok, but conventional. It is especially interesting to note that he discredited this jug, which later has achieved status as an icon of Scandinavian

21. *Ibid.* p 101-102 (“en medfødt eller ervervet evne til å leve seg inn i hvert enkelt fags og hver oppgaves forutsetninger”)

22. Bjarne W. Berg, “Arkitektene på gullvekt—innlegg i diskusjonen om arkitektenes kompetanse som brukskunstnere” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 140

23. Kay Bojesen quoted in Ivar David-Andersen, “Arkitektene på gullvekt—innlegg i diskusjonen om arkitektenes kompetanse som brukskunstnere” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 138 (“Naturligvis skal min Udtalelse forstaaes saaledes at Sølvstøjt kræver et saa indgaaende Materialkundskab og en saa betydelig Haandverkskunnen, at man meget sjældent ser et Stykke velpropotioneret og praktisk Sølvstøjt tegnet av en Arkitekt eller anden Person der ikke har den fornødne faglige Erfaring.”)

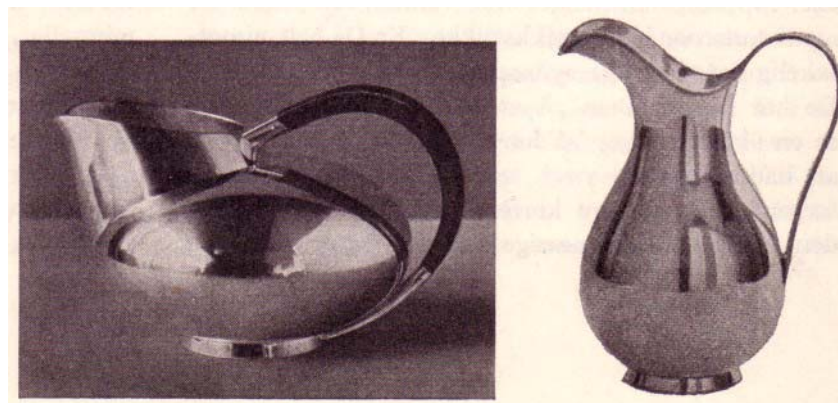


Figure 6–3: The silver jugs illustrating the debate between architect Bernt Heiberg and goldsmith Ivar David-Andersen in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943. Left: Jug (silver) David-Andersen, 1934. Designer: Th. Lie Jørgensen. Right: Jug (silver) A. Michelsen, 1948. Designer: Kay Fisker.

modernism, based on its sins against basic modernist principles such as material and constructional honesty:

the handle is passed off as a direct continuation of the material of the main form itself, something which in terms of manufacturability is simply impossible... The handle [must be]...made separately in a heavier dimensioning, and subsequently solder it to the corpus.²⁴

The jug designed by painter, goldsmith and teacher Th. Lie Jørgensen and manufactured by the company David-Andersen, on the other hand, had, according to Ivar David-Andersen, none of these flaws and dishonesties. He described it as “well crafted and having a functional form. One can see that it is designed by a man who is both artist and craftsman.”²⁵

Heiberg rebutted and criticised the functionality of the David-Andersen jug:

The craftsman-designed jug can, as opposed to the architect-designed, not be cleaned. Especially the spout, with a tiny little exterior hole and a fixed interior strainer, entirely inaccessible.²⁶

The argument seems to be whether constructional honesty or hygiene is to be considered the higher virtue of functionalism. Anyhow, it is much more edifying to interpret this debate as an expression of two occupational groups’ positioning in the battle for

24. Ivar David-Andersen, “Arkitektene på gullvekt—innlegg i diskusjonen om arkitektenes kompetanse som brukskunstnere” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 139 (“hanken gir seg ut for å være en direkte fortsettelse av materialet i selve hovedformen, noe som håndverksmessig slett ikke lar seg utføre... Hanken [må] ...lages for seg selv i en tykkere dimensjonering og deretter lodde den på hovedformen.”)

25. *Ibid.* (“håndverksmessig godt laget og har en funksjonell form. Man ser at den er tegnet av en mann som både er kunstner og håndverker.”)

26. Bernt Heiberg, “Arkitektene på gullvekt—innlegg i diskusjonen om arkitektenes kompetanse som brukskunstnere” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 141 (“Den håndverkertegnede kaffekannen kan, i motsetning til den arkitekttegnede, ikke gjøres ren. Særlig er tuten, med et bitte lite hull ute og en fast sil inne, helt og holdent utilgjengelig.”)

hegemony regarding the emerging profession of industrial designer (By industrial designer I here mean a trained professional *non-trade-specific* designer whose expertise is primarily process-based and not product/material-based.)

The architect Heiberg made his case with arguments based on what he saw as the unique and universal premises and qualifications of his profession regarding the highly diversified planning and co-ordination processes required for their designs, and how this was easily transmissible from buildings to other products. The artisan-craftsman David-Andersen, on the other hand, stressed the importance of the intimate trade-specific knowledge of material, process and tradition. How David-Andersen believed this relation should be and what the designer's role was to be in trades based on more industrialized production processes than silverware, he did not say. But there is no doubt that there were significant forces also within the applied art movement who seconded his insistence on the unity of artist and craftsman in one person, and who do not seem to have given much thought to the world of industrial production at all.

If, with the benefit of hindsight, we were to decide on a “winner” of this dispute, it would have to be David-Andersen. Because in Norway, as opposed to e.g. Denmark and Italy, architects never made a serious bid for hegemony over the new industrial design profession. But craftsmen-designers were challenged by other professional groups as well: In addition to this lot, firmly established within the industrial art sector, the first generation of Norwegian industrial designers consisted mostly of interior designers, accompanied by a group of engineers who were redefined as designers—more or less to their own surprise. In any case, as we shall see, the questions regarding the qualities, competence and expertise of industrial designers touched upon in this quarrel would resurface time and again, in various debates, as both the industrial structure and the design field were transformed in the decades to come.

However, the interior designers, or interior architects (*interiørarkitekt*) as they called themselves, also signed on for the battle for hegemony regarding the emerging profession of industrial designer. Many of them were already deeply involved in the design of products, but this activity was largely confined to the design of furniture, and at this time predominantly restricted to the craft-based furniture production at that—cabinet makers and small workshops prioritizing quality craftsmanship and aesthetic values over quantity and affordability. But from the realm of applied art, they wanted to move into the manufacturing of goods in general. In the spring of 1945, at the time of the founding of the Association of Interior Architects (*Interiørarkitektenes Forening—IAF*), Arne Remlov—IAF co-founder and president—spoke warmly of the qualifications his own occupational group possessed regarding product design:

[T]he interior designer is happily consulted regarding the design for applied art, and... his involvement can become pertinent also regarding industrial products in general. As these gradually have become more and more perfect, one has started to take an interest in their form. It is not the intention here, to generally criticise the effort made by the engineer. He may undoubtedly possess equally strong feelings of form as a designer, but it is a completely natural consequence that the knowledge obtained by the public as to the qualifications of the interior designer leads the thoughts towards using him as creator of form also regarding common industrial products. In America this has resulted in a

profession, *Industrial Design*.

The applied art schools have their own branches of study for this profession, in addition to the founding of new, separate schools for it. There is obviously a need for such people also here in this country, but due to the small scale of things they must be recruited from neighbouring professions. The interior designer should be the most obvious candidate, given his concern with formal problems, his general knowledge of materials and his inherent or acquired knowledge of what is practical. He has a solid basis for the ability to design the good telephone set, beautiful and appropriate radio sets, and the good porcelain washbasin.²⁷

Remlov thus used the same arguments on behalf of the interior designers as Bernt Heiberg had used on behalf of the architects, that is; the universalist qualifications regarding formal problems and the ability—innate or acquired—to solve complex tasks in a rational manner with appropriateness as their guiding star. The universality should distinguish them both from the artisan-craftsmen much as their aesthetic expertise should distinguish them from the engineers. In addition, Remlov boasts the interior designers' knowledge of materials as a qualification which should give them an advantage over the architects.

It is interesting to observe that this was the very first time the term *industrial design* was used in *Bonytt*. Like most new loanwords, it was used in its English spelling, and not norwegianized.²⁸ Industrial design seems to have been interpreted as a term describing a somewhat different field than applied art (*brukskunst*), which was the customary term in Norway at the time. This indicates an emerging awareness that not all fields of design could be regarded as *applied art*—as *artistic qualities applied to utility articles*—and that there were vast challenges ahead which would require a more integrated approach to the design process and the design profession.

Such an expansion of the professional domain was also demonstrated in the occasion of the term's second appearance in *Bonytt*, by the British designer Alec E. Davis in his article "English Industrial Design" which e.g. presented the newly established British Council of Industrial Design and was illustrated by objects such as an electric iron, a control apparatus for radio tubes, and a combined heating and cooking apparatus.²⁹ But many years would pass before any significant measures were taken to change the perspective from applied art to industrial design, and even more time would pass before

27. Arne Remlov, "Interiørarkitektens arbeide" in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 33 ("[I]nteriørarkitekten lar seg gjerne konsultere når det gjelder formgivingen innen kunstindustrien, og... hans innblanding kan bli aktuell også når det gjelder industriprodukter i sin alminnelighet. Etter hvert som disse er blitt mer og mer fullkomne er man begynt å interessere seg for formen. Det er ikke meningen her generelt å kritisere den innsats ingeniøren har ytet. Han kan uten tvil eie like sterke følelser for form som en brukskunstner, men det er en helt naturlig følge at det kjennskap offentligheten får til interiørarkitektens kvalifikasjoner bringer tankene hen på å benytte ham til formskaper, også når det gjelder alminnelige industriprodukt. I Amerika er det blitt et fag av dette, *Industrial Design*.

Kunstindustriskolene har sine egne linjer for dette fag, ved siden av at det er oppstått separate skoler for det. Det er selvsagt et behov for slike folk også her i landet, men som følge av de små forhold må de rekruteres fra nærliggende yrker. Interiørarkitekten er da vel den som nærmest kommer i betraktning med sin befatning med formproblemene, sin generelle materialkunnskap og sin medførte eller erfaringsmessige kjennskap til det hensiktsmessige. Han har et bra grunnlag for å kunne tegne det gode telefonapparat, vakre og hensiktsmessige radioapparat, og den gode porselensvask.")

28. When I have used the words *design* or *designer* earlier in the text it has been due to a lack of better suited translations of Norwegian words, generally *formgiving* and *brukskunstner* respectively.

the term (industrial) design were to dispute the position of the term applied art (*brukskunst*).

The prevailing attitude, as expressed by Remlov, seems to have been that the primary challenge represented by industrial design was that the existing design professionals such as interior architects, furniture designers, craftsmen-designers, etc., could take on the task of designing new types of products for new branches of industry. In this context it is very interesting to note that a very early concrete initiative in exploring the new and alien—by name, if not practice—field of industrial design came not from the design community, but from the industry.

In November 1948, the Federation of Norwegian Industries' Bureau of Rationalization (Industriforbundets rationaliseringskontor—IRAS) organized a two-day seminar on industrial design. About 70 people attended, a number that must be characterized as substantial. But this was an inquiry into the enigmas of industrial design by and for engineers, not the design community. Apart from the sculptor Ståle Kyllingstad, former art director at Hadeland glass works,³⁰ the speakers did not represent the applied art community, but were mostly engineers.³¹ Even the historic perspective on design was covered by an engineer; Philip Pedersen, who was director of the Norwegian Museum of Technology (Norsk Teknisk Museum), rather than by one of the “usual authorities” such as someone from the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo). It is hardly surprising, then, that the seminar reportedly called for a design education better attuned to industrial practice than the existing education “which prepares them [designers] for work within the various craft branches and in the less developed industries such as the furniture industry”.³²

29. Alec E. Davis, “Engelsk Industrial Design” in *Bonytt* Vol. 6, 1946, p 20-24. Davies later became editor of the *Design* magazine, established in 1949 as the official mouthpiece of the Council of Industrial Design: Jill Seddon, “The Architect and the ‘Arch-Pedant’: Sadie Speight, Nikolaus Pevsner and ‘Design Review’” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2007, p 40, n 45

30. He left his position at Hadeland in 1946. As an anecdote, it might be mentioned that Kyllingstad in the ensuing time did some work for Figgjo. However, there are no traces whatsoever of Kyllingstad in the Figgjo company archives, so his contribution must have been of a brief and limited nature. His work for Figgjo was most probably restricted to special commissions and/or artware such as statuettes and reliefs, as there are no indications that he was involved in design for serial production: Aini Stangeland, “Kunstneren som former glass og leire like godt” in *Urd*, Vol. 53, No. 21, 1949, p 640-641. Also, around 1930, before his tenure at Hadeland, he had “developed models for decorative works for Graverens Teglverk A/S”. (Graverens was Figgjo design manager Ragnar Grimsrud’s employer from 1928-1933 and 1934-1945): Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 2 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983) p 676 (“utarbeidet han modeller til dekorative arbeider for Graverens Teglverk A/S”)

31. Two architects were the exception: The Norwegian Otto Torgersen and the Swede Sven Hesselgren. Torgersen had studied at Goldsmiths College in London, and might thus have had a finger in the pie concerning the fact that a film lent by the British Council of Industrial Design was shown at the seminar and the presence of a mysterious “Mr. Alexander” (I have not been able to identify him) who gave a talk on “design and materials”: Liv Schjødt, “Industriell formgivning” in *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1948, p xxiv (“formgivningen og materiale. Ved Mr. Alexander”). For an a study of CoID propaganda films, see: Jonathan M. Woodham, “Managing British Design Reform II: The Film “Deadly Lampshade”: An Ill-Fated Episode in the Politics of ‘Good Taste’” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1996 p 101-115

32. Liv Schjødt, “Industriell formgivning” in *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1948, p xxiv (“som gjør dem skikket for arbeide innenfor de forskjellige håndverksgrener og i de mindre utviklede industrier som møbelindustrien”)

6.4 New impressions—new horizons

The regained freedom in 1945 must surely have been exciting. One of the consequences was that the borders were reopened, and the *Bonytt* editors and their friends and colleagues could once again travel freely abroad. The magazine had done its best to communicate impulses from our neighbouring countries also during the war, but this was of course no easy task given the severe restrictions both on events and on travel. But already from mid 1945 onwards, reports from fairs, exhibitions and conventions in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Copenhagen, London and elsewhere came washing in over the readers.³³

For instance, Jens von der Lippe went to Stockholm in 1945, full of enthusiasm, to report back from the glass and ceramics exhibition in the occasion of the Swedish Applied Art Association's (Svenska Slöjdföreningen) centenary. He was very impressed by the overall quality of the exhibited work, especially the industrial products. Their high quality was attributed to "[t]he close contact between industrial production and artistic work", but von der Lippe also expressed concern that the high demands and pressure would overstrain the artistic creativity.³⁴ He was particularly impressed by Gustavsberg's earthenware service *Praktika*, designed by Wilhelm Kåge, which he saw as a superior idea reflecting a harmony between artistic creativity and knowledge of materials and production methods [Figure 6-4]. It is worth noting that von der Lippe

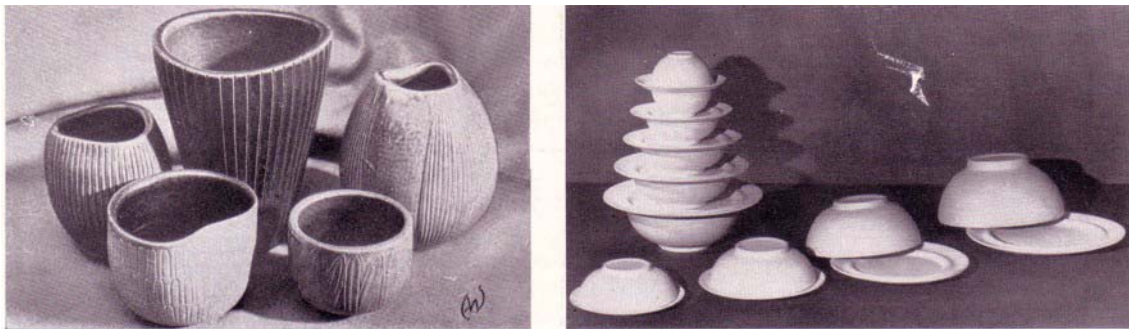


Figure 6-4: Illustrations from Jens von der Lippe's report on Swedish ceramics in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945. Left: Studio crafted stoneware by Gunnar Böchmann. Right: Service *Praktika* (earthenware) Gustavsberg, 1933. Designer: Wilhelm Kåge.

described *Praktika* as a *new* product, despite the fact that it had been produced since 1933. He praised its design for being based on utilitarian considerations, but did not mention that *Praktika* was anything but a commercial success for Gustavsberg—its very simplified aesthetic did not appeal to the wider public.³⁵ Probably, he simply did not have any knowledge of or interest in these aspects.

33. See e.g. Aage Schou, "Intrykk fra København" in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 89-90

34. Jens von der Lippe, "Glass og keramikk ved Svenska Slöjdföreningens 100-års jubileum 1945" in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 145 ("[d]en nære kontakten mellom industriell produksjon og kunstnerisk arbeide")

35. Charlotte and Peter Fiell, *Scandinavian Design* (Köln & London: Taschen, 2002) p 338

But not all reports from foreign events and conditions were of a praising and uncritical nature. Arne Remlov demurred to the trends he observed in Sweden. He claimed that the Swedish designers all were “having... slightly too much fun!... there are, in the year 1945, evident signs of decadence in Swedish design.”³⁶ Also, Danish furniture designer Børge Mogensen and architect Peter Hvidt accounted for how the Danish furniture industry set out to cope with the precarious need for affordable furniture.³⁷ This was no distinctively Norwegian problem. Because, like Mogensen put it:

In Denmark, one can, if one have enough money, purchase furniture of excellent craftsmanship and very high utilitarian quality from the proper cabinet maker, but if the financial resources are limited, it is suddenly much more difficult to find furniture with the above mentioned qualities.³⁸

The catalysed social vocation also revitalised the interest in low-cost housing. But when *Bonytt* chose to present the work of Oslo Housing Cooperative (Oslo Bolig- og Sparelag—OBOS), they focused on the newest, most exclusive project—Balkeby, situated on the West End of Oslo. The buildings, designed by architect Edgar Smith Berentsen, were constructed in 1937-1938 [Figure 6-5].³⁹ The *Bonytt* illustrations portray an interior dominated by modern, already canonized furniture from the interwar years, such as a lamp designed by Poul Henningsen for Louis Poulsen, chairs designed by Alvar Aalto for Artek, and armchairs designed by Hermann Munthe-Kaas for Christiania Jernsengfabrik. The latter was nicknamed “the people’s chair” (folkestolen), but it was hardly ever found outside the homes of architects. But to render this “correct” interior “cosy and inhabited”, as the caption reads, it was garnished with a landscape painting, an antique clock and cheerful textiles.⁴⁰ That the single antique chosen was a clock is hardly coincidental. Because, as the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard remarked when observing that clocks seemed to vanish from the modern interior; “The clock is a mechanical heart that reassures us about our own heart.”⁴¹ So, even social housing projects got their bourgeois twist.

36. Arne Remlov, “Aktiv 100-års jubilant” in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 156 (“har det... litt for moro!.. det er år 1945 tydelige tegn på dekadanse i svensk brukskunst.”)

37. Børge Mogensen, “Danske kooperative møbler” in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 93-100 and Peter Hvidt, “Danske pakkemøbler” in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 116-119

38. *Ibid.* p 93 (“I Danmark kan man, hvis man har Penge nok, hos den riktige Møbelsnedker anskaffe sig Møbler af meget høj haandværks- og brugsmæssig Kvalitet, men hvis det knibep med de økonomiske Midler, er det straks meget sværere at faa Møbøer med de overnævnte Egenskaper.”) Here it is certainly tempting to point out the irony that the furniture Mogensen himself designed during the post war era now has become elitist icons and are anything but affordable.

39. Arne Gunnarsjaa, *Arkitekturleksikon* (Oslo: Abstrakt, 1999) p 71. Berentsen designed several other projects for OBOS after the war as well: Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982) p 176

40. Liv Schjødt, “OBOS—en by i byen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 128-132. Schjødt was made subeditor in 1946.

41. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996) p 24. Pondering on the place of antiques in general in the modern interior, Baudrillard claims that: “Man is not ‘at home’ amid pure functionality—he requires something like that lustre of the wood of the True Cross which could make a church truly holy, some kind of talisman... Such is the role of the antique object.” (p 79)



Figure 6–5: *Bonytt*'s illustrations of the OBOS project at Balkeby in Oslo. Social housing turned bourgeois. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 5, 1945)

The end of the war also meant new possibilities for organizational work. For instance, the Association of Interior Architects (Interiørarkitektene Forening—IAF) was founded in 1945. The number of interior designers in Norway had increased considerably over the last decade or so, much due to the relatively large number of candidates who had

completed their studies at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens Håndverks- og Kunstindustriskole—SHKS) during the war. Arne Remlov played an important role in this work, and the group of young professionals were assisted by the Norwegian Association of Architects (Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund—NAL) in the setting up of the new organization. One of their central aims was to establish standardized fees.⁴² IAF counted 14 members in 1945, but grew to 25 the following year and 46 in 1953.⁴³

The Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) had had to close down most of its activities during the war. The association's original programme, to improve the aesthetic and utilitarian quality of Norwegian craft and industrial products, was seen as more important than ever before in the post-war situation. In an attempt to better meet the challenges posed by the new circumstances and the reconstruction, the association was reorganized in 1946.

Striving for deeper influence on local/regional conditions, local chapters were set up in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, and Stavanger, and these were followed by Kristiansand in 1953. The local associations were amalgamated in an umbrella organization entitled the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst).⁴⁴

However, this decentralized structure was never to function as intended. The number of local chapters failed to grow, and the level of activity in the regional chapters was too low. The Bergen chapter was probably the more active and enduring of the chapters outside the capital, with a permanent showroom at The West Norway Museum of Decorative Art (Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum) and activities stretching into the mid 1970's. The Stavanger chapter started out strong and got a permanent showroom in the basement of Stavanger Art Association's (Stavanger Kunstforening) building, but the level of activity eventually dropped. The Kristiansand chapter, however, never assumed the intended momentum.⁴⁵ In any case, the result was that the Oslo chapter and the National Association ended up fighting over the hegemony and mandates, and the idea of decentralization disintegrated.⁴⁶

The National Association were to function as a coordinating body, organizing travelling exhibitions in collaboration with the local chapters, representing Norway in international affairs, and representing the applied art community in dealings with public bodies and other institutions. The local chapter in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) would in some respects become the direct continuation of the old association, which had had its headquarters in Oslo. Art historian Knut Greve was elected it's chairman (1946-

42. Arnulf Bjørshol, "Studiesirkler—unge brukskunstneres samarbeid under krigen" in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 92

43. A list of members was regularly featured in *Bonytt*. For the numbers cited, see: *Bonytt*, No. 4-5-6, 1945, p 1, *Bonytt*, No. 5, 1946, p 1 and *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1953, p xx. The 14 initial members were: Runar Børresen, Nils Eggen, Gunnar Eriksen, Torvald Helland, Torleiv Hellkaas, Karl Karlbom, Rolf Rastad, Adolf Relling, Arne Remlov, Erling Rustad, Aage Schou, Alf Sture, Gunnar Sørli and Andreas Aasheim.

44. N.N., "Norsk Brukskunst" in *Bonytt* Vol. 6, 1946, p 25

45. The Kristiansand chapter was founded in an enthusiastic moment in the wake of a successful housing exposition, and its first chairman was the architect Fritjof E.W.E. Fonahn. The chapter hosted the LNB (bi-)annual meeting in 1954, but the level of activity soon fell. A banker named Arne Norberg took over as chairman in 1958 and although it continued to exist into the 1960s, Kristiansand Brukskunstforening can hardly be described as a thriving organization.

46. Interview with Arne Remlov, "Er ikke designerne våre gode nok?" in *Morgenposten*, 19/12-1964.

1948), Jens von der Lippe vice-chairman, and Arne Remlov secretary (from 1947). Greve had been secretary of the old Applied Art Association (1932-1942) and would later become president (1948-1950) of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art. Secretary-general of the National Association, Ferdinand Aars was elected board member of the Oslo chapter.⁴⁷ These intimate connections between the association and *Bonytt* were formalized in 1947 when the two institutions signed an agreement making *Bonytt* the association's official organ.⁴⁸

6.5 Building the country: Design and reconstruction

The Applied Art Association in Oslo resumed its exhibition activities which had been a vital part of its mission before the war. The first one, shown in February-March 1946, was devoted to applied art from the war years.⁴⁹ But already in the autumn of the same year, a more progressive exhibition entitled *Facing Reconstruction (Foran gjenreisningen)* was mounted. Like the title indicates, its purpose was to showcase products designed and produced in the spirit of reconstruction, mostly furniture, textiles and ceramics. In his review of the exhibition, Arne Remlov expressed his dismay that some artware also had been selected, because he believed that the exhibition's image of social responsibility called for more commonly available products. It is also interesting to note that Remlov criticised quite severely the exhibited products from his co-editor Jens von der Lippe's ceramic studio:

[A]lso here, it seems like one is afraid to leave the artefacts unadorned. The objects are often overdecorated to the verge of boredom, and the decor is not always particularly talented.⁵⁰

Based on the ceramics shown at this exhibition, *Bonytt's* most frequently used photographer, Karl Teigen (originally trained as a ceramist himself), seized the pen and raised the question of decoration once again. In his opinion, the overdecorated products with their "apparent sumptuousness" only covered a poor artistic creativity and lack of inspiration [Figure 6-6]:

Is it necessary with all these flowers on jugs and platters which threaten to vulgarize our entire production? Flowers are later to be put in the jug, and on the platter there shall be

47. N.N., "Norsk Brukskunst" in *Bonytt* Vol. 6, 1946, p 25

48. N.N., "Brukskunst—Bonytt" in *Bonytt* Vol. 7, 1947, p 173 The magazine remained the official organ for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—LNB) until 1970, with the partial exception of a couple of years in the mid-1960s when *Bonytt* was published "in collaboration with" the National Federation, but this specification is just a organizational technicality, and was considered as such by the *Bonytt* editors as well: N.N., "Bonytt—Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst" in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpagged [app.] ("i samarbeid med")

49. Bernt Heiberg, "Brukskunst fra krigsårene" in *Bonytt* Vol. 6, 1946, p 26-29

50. Arne Remlov, "Foran Gjenreisningen" in *Bonytt* Vol. 6, 1946, p 156-157 ("også her virker det som om man er redd for å la gjenstandene forbli udekorert. Tingene er ofte overlesset med dekor til det kjedsommelige, og dekoren er ikke alltid særskilt talentfull.")



Figure 6–6: Photograph of products from the pottery factories Elle and Aaserud exhibited at the “Facing Reconstruction” (“Foran gjenreisningen”) exhibition in 1946, illustrating Karl Teigen’s criticism of naturalistic floral decorations. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 7, 1947)

fruit or other treats.⁵¹

Even Teigen believed decor to be a legitimate aspect of a product, but had no sympathy for the widespread use of more or less naturalistic floral decors. Decorative effects should be sought in the materiality of the clay itself, in the glaze and in the process of baking. These ideas probably owed much to the inspiration from the recent developments in experimental Danish studio stoneware, especially that of Axel Salto and Nathalie Krebs, which was exhibited in Norway and figured in *Bonytt* [Figure 6-7].⁵² Teigen also claimed that the low-temperature baked ceramics, such as pottery, had no justification as utility articles at all, due to their fragility.⁵³ Hence, studio ceramists should turn to stoneware and ceramic factories to earthenware in the name of utility. But apart from these dissatisfactions, the exhibition was praised as a worthy and highly needed contribution on behalf of the Applied Art Association in Oslo to the much felt social responsibility of the reconstruction and its many and varied tasks ahead.

Bonytt even called on the great paternal character of Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen himself in the endeavour to motivate and coordinate the efforts of architects and designers in the name of social responsibility required for an efficient reconstruction of the nation. As a politician, he new very well that flattery goes a long way:

We now have furniture designers who do not consider it their greatest task to make expensive pieces of furniture for exquisite salons, but who are more interested in how beautiful furniture can be manufactured economically in mass-production. We now have designers who think about how the cheap household goods can also be enhanced through forms and colours, and who teach people to appreciate such things.⁵⁴

51. Karl Teigen, “Vår keramikk—stoffvirkning kontra dekorasjon” in *Bonytt* Vol. 7, 1947, p 34 (“Er det nødvendig med alle disse blomster på krukker og fat som truer med å forsimple hele vår produksjon? Blomster skal jo senere stå oppe i krukken, og på fatet skal det ligge frukt eller annet godt.”)

52. Arne Remlov, “Dansk keramik på norgesbesøk” in *Bonytt* Vol. 7, 1947, p 46-47

53. Teigen, *op.cit.* p 34-35

But after thus praising the expertise and ability of the nation's designers (and architects) and their potential in contributing socially useful work, Gerhardsen took the moral high ground. By way of first showing his concern for the difficulties designers had experienced in exercising their profession during the five long years of war, he then turned this situation around and called for their soul-searching and moral rearmament:

If the architects and designers in this period have become capable of seeing the connection between their work and the society they work for, of seeing how everything must follow the same development, then I believe much, despite all, has been achieved. If so, they will also possess the earnestness needed to be able to cut right through all the detrimental whims of fashion and ephemeral ideals that always threaten in these trades.⁵⁵

The message from the Prime Minister could hardly be clearer: If the design community wanted any support and influence at all, they had better start playing ball—i.e. stop playing artists, and start making themselves useful.

And so they did—at least in theory, and at least for a while. The architects might have felt Gerhardsen's call to arms more opportune than the designers. For instance, 392 designs were submitted when the Directorate of Reconstruction (Gjenreisningsdirektoratet) organized an architectural competition for small, prefabricated houses for the reconstruction in Finnmark—the northernmost region of Norway, where the Germans during their retreat had burned down virtually every building in their path.⁵⁶ The 392 designs would suggest a genuine social concern within the architectural community—but then again it might also reflect a critical lack of commissions.

There can be little doubt that designers in the immediate postwar period genuinely considered social responsibility a precarious and all-important vocation. In an account of the education of interior designers, Birger Dahl, who had himself only just completed this education at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens Håndverks- og Kunstindustriskole—SHKS), wrote:

The interior designer must be practical, with a sense of the possibilities of the machine, and he must above all be socially minded, because here await probably the most important tasks.⁵⁷

54. Einar Gerhardsen, "Innsats" in *Bonytt* Vol. 6, 1946, p 1 ("Vi har fått møbeltegnere, som ikke ser det som sin største oppgave å lage dyre enkeltmøbler til utsøkte salonger, men som er mer opptatt av hvordan vakkert bohove kan fremstilles billig i masseproduksjon. Vi har fått brukskunstnere som tenker på hvordan den billige hjeminnredning også kan berikes med former og farger, og som lærer folk å kunne glede seg over slike ting.")

55. *Ibid.* ("Hvis arkitektene og brukskunstnerne i denne tiden har fått evnen til å se sammenhengen mellom sitt arbeid og det samfunn de arbeider for, se hvordan alt må følge den samme utviklingen, da mener jeg at mye, trass i alt, er vunnet. Da vil de også ha fått de alvor som må til, for å kunne skjære tvers gjennom alle skjemmende moteluner og øyeblikksidealer som alltid truer i disse fag.")

56. Sverre Witzøe, "Konkurransen om småhus for gjenoppbyggingen i Finnmark" in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 171-175

57. Birger Dahl, "Interiørarkitektens utdanning" in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 8 ("Interiørarkitekten må være praktisk, med sans for maskinens muligheter, og han må fremfor alt være sosialt innstilt, for her ligger kanskje de største oppgavene og venter.")



Arne Remlov:

DANSK KERAMIK PÅ NORGESBESØK



Dette var på tide. Sjelden har vel en utstilling av et fremmed lands kunsthåndverk vært mer velkommen enn den danske tøytrykk- og keramikkutstilling, som ble vist i Oslo Kunstindustrimuseum i januar i år — og noe senere i Bergen og Trondheim. Selvfølgelig sterkest ønsket av de aktive brukskunstnere. Men foruten dem finnes det jo en ikke liten kontingent interesserte som på forskjellige måter har fulgt det danske kunsthåndverks sikre utvikling gjennom mange år, og som nå fikk høve til å se — om ikke føle på — den smukkeste representasjon av dansk keramisk produksjon fra den siste tid.

Når jeg sa det var på tide — tenker jeg særlig på dem av våre kunsthåndverkere som arbeider med keramikk, på de få som sysler med stofftrykk og ikke minst på alle elevene av Statens Håndverk- og Kunstindustriskole, som i høy grad trenger den oppstemmende impuls synet av en slik fin samling arbeider kan gi. Et studium av disse arbeider vil forhåpentlig ha gitt de vordende brukskunstnere en større ansvarsfølelse overfor faget. Den er ikke alltid til stede herhjemme.

Bonytt's medarbeider, maleren *Arne E. Holm*, gir et annet sted i bladet en betraktning over tekstilene, de trykte stoffene, på utstillingen. Jeg skal innskrenke meg til å omtale de keramiske arbeider. Men jeg vil

Steingodsarbeider av Axel Salto fra Den Kongelige Porcelainsfabrik, København. Medarbeidere: kjeramiker Haller, ingeniør Madslund og fabrikkmester Mathiesen.

Figure 6–7: Arne Remlov praised the experimental Danish studio stoneware, here illustrated by Axel Salto's work for Den Kongelige Porcelainsfabrik. (Facsimile from *Bonytt*, Vol. 7, 1947)

But this attitude could not have been regarded as self-evident. In a first attempt at positioning the design professions before the postwar reconstruction, Bernt Heiberg

found it necessary to explain that “[o]ur interest is not merely aesthetic, but also technological, economical and social. We wish to learn more... in order to... build the country.”⁵⁸

The social responsibility is extremely evident in the first *Bonytt* editorial of 1947, where Heiberg, in a fit of self-criticism on behalf of the magazine’s editorial policy thus far, wrote:

Should we have anything to note regarding our own wake, it must be that it might be *too* aesthetic. We still rejoice at everything beautiful, but we have set ourselves a higher goal than decorating our environment.⁵⁹

It was, in other words, very important under the current circumstances that their quest for better home environments was not regarded as mere aesthetics, as something nonessential and redundant in these times of material scarcity and basic needs. Their mission would not stand a chance if it was not closely connected with the reconstruction. Following this reasoning, the applied art movement sought new and influential allies. Remlov called on governmental bodies for benevolent attitudes and financial support for “the philanthropic work carried out by all our designers, their organizations and friends. This is about the welfare of nation and people.”⁶⁰ By defining their work as charitable and as an essential part of the construction of the welfare state, the applied art movement tried to enrol new, powerful actors intended to extend and fortify their actor network.

6.6 Mass-production: Marvel or malady?

In accordance with the acknowledgement that the democratization of modern design required a certain degree of dissociation from the world of art, scientification and professionalization became important means also for the Applied Art Association towards increased acceptance and appreciation of the design trade(s). Thus, the association and *Bonytt* applauded the new educational system at The National College of Applied Art and Craft (SHKS) introducing a Diploma work as the qualifying examination. This Diploma would, according to Jens von der Lippe and Arne Remlov, help raise the reputation of SHKS and its candidates to the level of the architects and engineers educated at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH) in Trondheim.⁶¹ The respect and acknowledgement these candidates enjoyed among the general public,

58. Bernt Heiberg, “Bo i fred” in *Bonytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 37 (“Vår interesse er ikke bare estetisk, men også teknisk, økonomisk og sosial. Vi vil gjerne vite mer... for... å... bygge landet.”)

59. Bernt Heiberg, “1947” in *Bonytt* Vol. 7, 1947, p 1 (“Skulle vi selv ha noe å bemerke om vårt kjølvann, må det være at det kanskje er *for* estetisk. Vi gleder oss fremdeles over alt som er pent, men vi har satt oss et videre mål enn å pynte våre omgivelser.”)

60. Arne Remlov, “Kommentar til årgangen 1947” in *Bonytt* Vol. 7, 1947, p 224 (“det filantropiske arbeid som ytes av alle våre brukskunstnere, deres organisasjoner og venner. Det er landets og folkets ve og vel det gjelder.”)

61. Arne Remlov, “En skole i sterk utvikling” in *Bonytt* Vol. 6, 1946, p 85

and perhaps especially among the industry and official bodies, must have had an alluring effect on the design community.

A topic combining the sociodemocratic spirit of the reconstruction with the scientific goodwill was new technological developments. Although the applied art movement expressed a highly ambiguous attitude towards new technology in general, there was a deep fascination for the possibilities offered by new material technologies. An illustrating example of this is a (belated) report from an exhibition entitled “Aluminium from War to Peace” staged in the London department store Selfridges in the summer of 1945. The aim of the exhibition was to demonstrate how this material, which had undergone a tremendous development in terms of both process technology, production volume, and manufacturing applications during the war, now could—and, due to the sudden production surplus caused by the end of the war, had to—be employed for civil purposes. The report focused on the distinctive properties of this metal, such as the light weight, corrosion resistance, and economy of processing, and concluded that aluminium was the “material of the future” and represented immense challenges and opportunities for designers.⁶²

In fact, aluminium production would become one of the major pillars of Norwegian economy. Many aluminium works were established in Norway during the first post-war years, e.g. in Årdal.⁶³ But apart from some initiatives, such as the body factories (e.g. Strømmens Værksted who made streamlined bodies for buses, trams and trains in aluminium in the 1930s),⁶⁴ the kitchen utensils and other implements from manufacturers such as Høyang, Nordisk Aluminiumsindustri, Il-O-Van Aluminiumvarefabrik, Halden Aluminiumvarefabrikk, and the colourful bowls and flatware in anodized aluminium from Emalox and other more short-lived enterprises, aluminium would in Norway predominantly remain a question of production of raw materials and not widely applied in the manufactured goods industry, and thus never became the primary challenge and great opportunity for the designers, as was suggested.⁶⁵

62. G. H. Friese-Green, “Utstillingen “Aluminium fra krig til fred”” in *Bonytt* Vol. 7, 1947, p 87-91 (“Fremtidens materiale”)

63. For more on Norwegian aluminium works and their economic, social and cultural significance, see e.g. Rolv Petter Amdam, Dag Gjestland and Andreas Hompland (eds.), *Årdal—Verket og bygda 1947-1997* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1997)

64. Fredrik Wildhagen, “Flodhesten, Gullfisken og Kristine Valdresdatter—Streamlining og designhistorien” in Mirjam Gelfer-Jørgensen (ed.), *Nordisk Funktionalisme 1925-1950* (København: Det danske Kunstindustrimuseum & Nordisk Forum for Formgivningshistorie, 1986) p 53-55. They were designed by Strømmens Verksted’s own Ingwald Müller and his fellow engineers Rømcke and Høstmælingen; Christian Stokke, “Tiden før 1932—lastebilene og bussene” in Øistein Bertheau and Christian Stokke (eds.), *Made in Norway? Historien om forsøk på bilproduksjon i Norge* (Oslo: Norsk Teknisk Museum, 1991) p 133

65. For a history of aluminium design, see: Sarah Nicols (ed.), *Aluminum by Design* (Pittsburgh/New York: Carnegie Museum of Art/Abrams, 2000) See also: Dennis P. Doordan, “Promoting Aluminum: Designers and the American Aluminum Industry” in Dennis P. Doordan (ed.), *Design History—An Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995) p 158-164 and Clive Edwards, “Aluminium Furniture, 1886-1986—The Changing Applications and Reception of a Modern Material” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2001 p 207-225. For a cultural history of perhaps the most emblematic example of design in aluminium, the 1933 Bialetti *Moka Express* stove-top coffee maker, see: Jeffrey T. Schnapp, “The Romance of Caffeine and Aluminum” in Bill Brown (ed.), *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) p 304-329

Another subject which had the potential of uniting design with the aura of science and social commitment was kitchen equipment. The kitchen had already in the interwar years become an arena for scientific labour- and efficiency studies, giving room for the institutionalization of home economics and notions of the kitchen as a laboratory or a factory run by the housewife as an engineer or machinist.⁶⁶ In Germany, this movement had led to the development of the *Frankfurterküche*—a standardized kitchen intended for the new *Existenzminimum* homes of the social housing projects.

In post-war Norway, these ideas were resumed and incorporated in the rationale dominating the large-scale reconstruction projects. *Bonytt*'s subeditor Liv Schjødt urged consumers to demand and manufacturers to produce standardized, module-based, industrialized kitchen equipment. Here, as so often before, *Bonytt* felt the need to reassure their readers (or themselves?) that mass-produced objects did not mean the end of individuality and the home's personal character.⁶⁷

The moral was that practicality and affordability weighed more than uniqueness, but the aesthetic preference for elegant simplicity was, like always, close at hand. Because even *Bonytt* realized that this standard, normal design was, in fact, not all that normal. As Bernt Heiberg put it, describing the elegant simplicity of the interior design of the apartment exhibition *Live Correctly (Bo riktig)* mounted by the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) as “ordinary, the way ordinary could be had it not been so rare.”⁶⁸

Despite the flirtation with science and technology shown in the admiration for new materials, production methods and manufacturing systems, the applied art movement's general attitude towards technology and mass-production remained sceptical and equivocal. President (1948-1950) of the National Association Knut Greve reported from a trip to the USA in 1949:

What is new from America? Primarily the inexorable declassing of applied art from property to consumption... The American scale reveals the misanthropy of mass-production, of the contempt for precisely the human effort which gives the product lasting value.⁶⁹

Greve blamed these deplorable conditions on what he considered to be a lack of cultural understanding and heritage in this nation. If the Americans wished to use their technological expertise for the sole purpose of mindless consumerism, Greve argued, it was their business. But the increasing influence of the USA on Europe represented a big threat in this respect.⁷⁰ Again, we see how the art related, tradition- and craft-based

66. For more on the scientification of home economics in interwar Norway, see Finn Arne Jørgensen, *Tidens krav—Framveksten av det vitenskapelige husstellet i Norge 1900-1940* [Master thesis] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2002)

67. Liv Schjødt, “Byggeklosser for voksne” in *Bonytt* Vol. 8, 1948, p 106-107

68. Bernt Heiberg, ““Bo riktig”—en utstilling bygget på boligundersøkelsens resultater” in *Bonytt* Vol. 8, 1948, p 165 (“almennelig, slik som almenlig kunne være hvis det ikke var så sjelden.”)

69. Knut Greve, “Hva nytt fra U.S.A.?” in *Bonytt* Vol. 9, 1949, p 17 (“Hva nytt fra Amerika? Det nye er først og fremst den ubønhørlige deklassering av brukskunsten fra eiendom til det å være forbruk...Den amerikanske målestokk avslører det menneskefiendtlige i masseproduksjonen, i forakten for nettopp den menneskelige innsats som gir varen varig verdi.”)

production systems were deemed superior to, more valuable, or at least more sophisticated than industrial factory production.

Quite a different side of American industrial design would later be communicated through the exhibition *Amerikansk Form*, which showed new, experimental furniture designed by Ray and Charles Eames, Eero Saarinen and George Nelson and was mounted in Oslo, Stavanger and Bergen in the winter/spring of 1954. But this furniture, and the advanced material- and production technology it was based on was thoroughly presented in *Bonytt* already in 1949.⁷¹ The unconventional use of foamrubber, pressed ply-wood and plastics and the resulting designs impressed and inspired young Norwegian designers.⁷² Even though these products were elitist in the sense that they were far from representative of mainstream American design, they still contributed to a more nuanced attitude both toward American design and mass-production.⁷³

Even the craftsman Jens von der Lippe who had eagerly promoted the supremacy of craft-based manufacturing systems had discovered that large-scale industrial production was not necessarily incompatible with good design—not only in terms of usability and technical quality, but also from an aesthetic viewpoint. At the request of MoMA director Elliot Noyes, von der Lippe had visited the Castleton China factory. There, he got to see the vast and highly automated and mechanized production facilities, as well as the results of the company's latest collaboration with designer Eva Zeisel—a bone china service that truly impressed the visiting Norwegian aesthete [Figure 6-8].⁷⁴ But this product can hardly be said to represent the average American industrial manufacture—the designer was born in Hungary and had lived and worked in both Germany and the Soviet Union before she emigrated to the USA—and the collaboration was patronized by MoMA.⁷⁵ Nevertheless—that such a refined and elegant product could be mass-produced on this immense scale was quite an eye-opener for von der Lippe, and probably also for the rest of the Norwegian applied art community. Still, it should be mentioned that von der Lippe remained a craftsman at heart, and expressed an at least equally strong admiration for e.g. the famous British emphatic studio ceramist Bernard Leach.⁷⁶

There were approximately 400 ceramic manufacturers in Norway in the late 1940s, an astonishing number in relation to the nation's population, which was no more than about 3,2 million at the time. The reason was mainly that the entire decade had been characterized by severe import restrictions and material shortages due to the war, something which had led to an unparalleled wave of start-ups of small pottery studios and workshops during and after the war—one of which was Figgjo. The majority of these lacked any real experience from and formal training in ceramic production, as well as the aesthetic orthodoxy. It was this wave of makeshift entrepreneurship that gave rise

70. *Ibid.*

71. Bjørn R. Jacobsen, "Charles Eames—en amerikansk stolkonstruktør" in *Bonytt* Vol. 9, 1949, p 48-49

72. Widar Halén, "Skumplasten—materialet som revolusjonerte norsk møbelindustri" in Jorunn Haakestad (ed.), *Design symbol stil—Kunst og industri i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Orfeus, 2000) p 33

73. Håkon Stenstadvold, "Nederlag" in *Bonytt* Vol. 9, 1949, p 55

74. Jens von der Lippe, "Om industri og kunst—og nytt amerikansk bruksporselen" in *Bonytt* Vol. 9, 1949, p 27-29

75. Charlotte and Peter Fiell, *Design of the 20th Century* (Köln: Taschen, 1999) p 750

76. Jens von der Lippe, "Bernard Leach' stengods—en keramisk begivenhet" in *Bonytt* Vol. 9, 1949, p 96-98

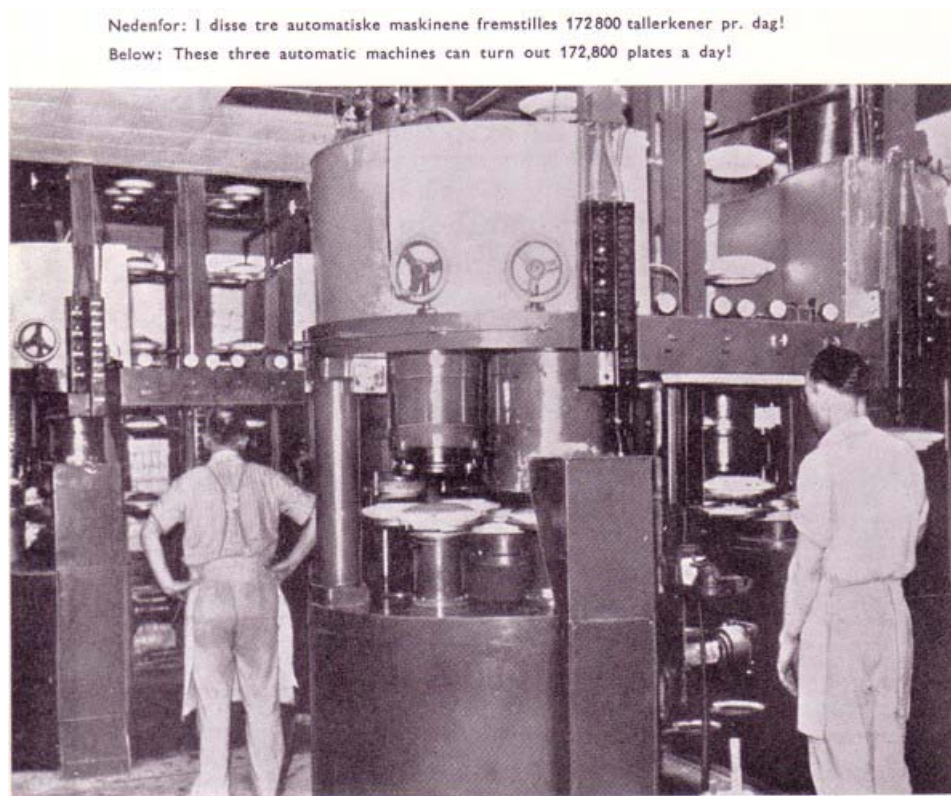


Figure 6–8: Good design, yet mass-produced—Jens von der Lippe could hardly believe what he saw at the American china factory Castleton China. Top: The caption reads: “These three automatic machines can turn out 172,800 plates a day!”. Below: Tea service *Museum* (bone china) designed by Eva Zeisel. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 9, 1949)

to the taunting epithet the “ashtray industry”. It is no wonder, then, that the applied art community was not particularly impressed by their work.

In the occasion of the exhibition *Norwegian Industrial Ceramics Today* (*Norsk industriell keramikk idag*) organized by the Norwegian Ceramic Association (Norsk Keramisk Landsforbund) at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) in December 1949, the Norwegian Ceramic Association and the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst) invited the Finnish/Swedish ceramist Kurt Ekholm to assess the situation and deliver an “impartial” review.⁷⁷

Ekholm agreed with Ferdinand Aars and the Applied Art Association that the majority of the Norwegian pottery production held a deplorable quality, both aesthetically and technically. He pointed out that utility articles, especially those intended for food storage of various kinds, ideally should be made of more durable materials than blue clay pottery, and when this could not be done due to material shortages, the technical quality of the pottery had to be raised drastically. In terms of aesthetic quality, he seconded the critique earlier raised by e.g. Karl Teigen that the perpetual and profusing floral decor had to go:

The whole form, maybe knurled or engraved in the material, covered by a beautiful glaze is what one preferably would like to see in the long run. Let the flowers—the living flowers—decorate the vase!...we must all admit that the rose bouquet baked in the material harmonize badly with the real function of the plate.⁷⁸

Despite the shortcomings of the majority of Norwegian industrial pottery production, Kurt Ekholm also found promising and exemplary products among the work of the eight manufacturers represented at the exhibition. Among these were a soup tureen and plates from Figgjo [Figure 6-9]. Although Figgjo at this point had but completed their transformation from pottery workshop to earthenware factory, the products shown here were blue clay pottery. This is the first time Figgjo is mentioned in *Bonytt*, and Ragnar Grimsrud’s designs and the simple, engraved decor of conventionalized leaves seems to have appealed to the Finnish/Swedish authority.

The very same issue also contained the first advertisement by Figgjo in *Bonytt*—the advertisement even featured the same photo that was used in Ekholm’s article.⁷⁹ Figgjo never became a frequent advertiser in *Bonytt*, and there is a clear tendency that their sparse advertisements appeared on the few occasions when the company were given editorial mention of some sort. This would suggest that Figgjo did not put much stock in *Bonytt* as a marketing channel. Why Figgjo chose not to advertise in *Bonytt* until 1949 and not more frequently throughout the following decades is hard to say, but one might speculate that the company considered the magazine too elitist. Of course, such

77. The Norwegian Ceramic Association consisted of 11 medium-sized manufacturers. The abundance of small pottery studios were not members, nor were the major factories of the sector—Porsgrund Porselensfabrikk and Egersund Fajansefabrikk. 8 of the 11 members were represented at the exhibition.

78. Kurt Ekholm, “Kritisk blick på norsk industriell keramik” in *Bonytt* Vol. 9, 1949, p 23 (“Den hela formen, kanske refflad eller skrapad i godset, överdragen av en vacker glasyr är väl i längden det man helst vill se. Låt blommorna—de levande blommorna—dekorera vasen! ...måste vi väl alla medge att den i godset inbrända rosenbuketten illa harmonierar med tallrikens egentliga funktion.”)

79. *Bonytt*, No. 2, 1949, p v

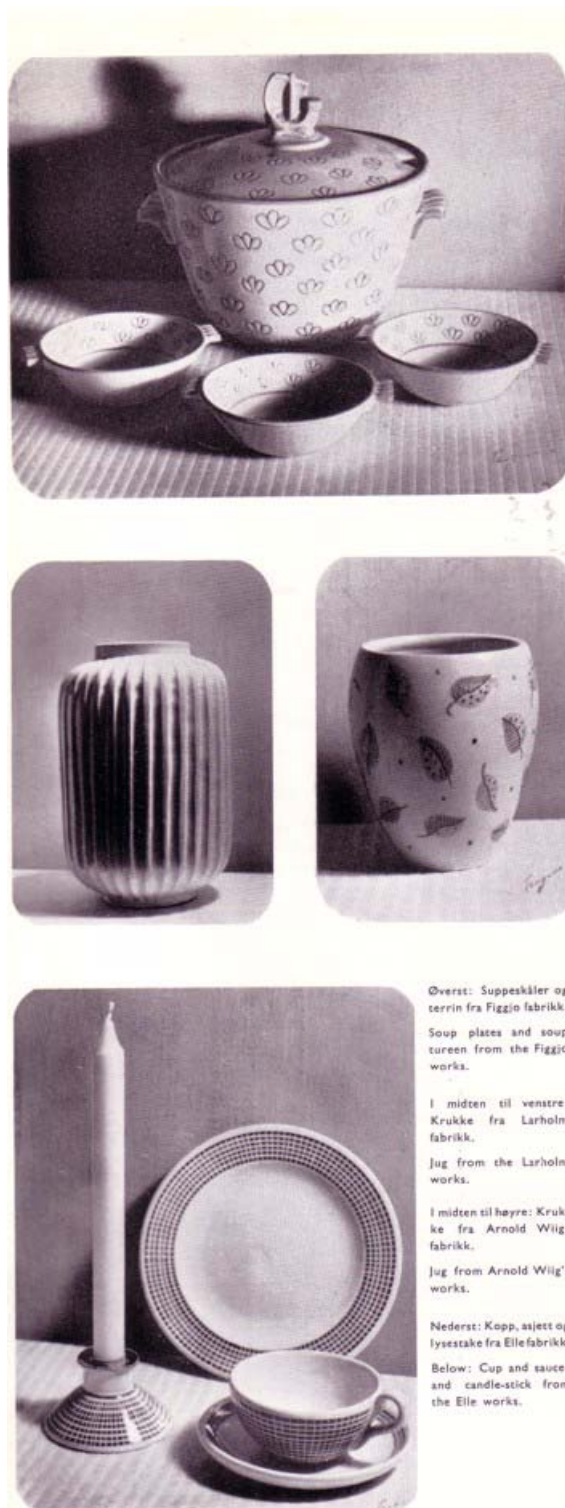


Figure 6–9: Products shown at the exhibition *Norwegian Industrial Ceramics Today* found exemplary by the Swedish ceramist and critic Kurt Ekholm. Top: Soup plates and soup tureen from the Figgjo works. Middle left: Jug from the Larholm works. Middle right: Jug from Arnold Wiig's works. Below: Plate, candle stick, cup and saucer from the Elle works. (Facsimile from *Bonytt*, Vol. 9, 1949)

marketing would not have made any sense before the company established a more professionalized production and national distribution after the war. Still, Figgjo's abstention is at odds with the strategies of their competitors: Many other potteries of a size, experience and ambition no greater than that of Figgjo at the time, such as Aaserud, Elle, Larholm, Åros, Bjørre, and Kongsberg, advertised repeatedly in *Bonytt* during the 1940s. So did Ragnar Grimsrud's former employer, Graverens—both before and after he moved on to Figgjo in 1946. Figgjo's endeavours are the topic of the next chapter, but before embarking on that study, a few words should be said about a potential arena for mediation between the national and the local, between ideology and practice.

6.7 Stavanger Applied Art Association

As mentioned above, local chapters of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst—LNB) were set up in Oslo, Trondheim, Bergen and Stavanger in 1946. The latter is of interest here, because of Figgjo's geographic proximity to Stavanger and because the local chapter in Stavanger was one of the few explicit and formalized interfaces between the company and the national design community.

The first chairman of Stavanger Applied Art Association (Stavanger Brukskunstforening) was the ceramist William Knutzen, who had left his reputable studio practice in Oslo to take over the position as design manager at Graverens in Sandnes—although only for a brief period—when Ragnar Grimsrud left for Figgjo. As chairman of the Stavanger chapter, Knutzen was also board member of the National Association.⁸⁰ Other driving forces behind the Stavanger chapter were its secretary Arne Storstein, the architects Jan Jæger and Thv. Solheim, art historian and curator at Stavanger Museum Jan H. Lexow, and long-standing chairman Fritjof Roaldsø (1946-1959), general manager of the Stavanger Society of Domestic Crafts (Husfliden i Stavanger). Roaldsø also served as vice president of the National Association for many years.

A decade after its foundation, Stavanger Applied Art Association (Stavanger Brukskunstforening) counted 200 members, of which 20 were practitioners and thus members of the Applied Artists' Union (Brukskunstnerlaget).⁸¹ This number was more or less stable from the first years and throughout the 1950s. Given the modest size of the town, these numbers indicate an active and noticeable association that clearly made its mark on the local society and culture. It was a highly active chapter throughout its first decade, and during the first six years, an astonishing 25 exhibitions were arranged.⁸² Among the more remarkable of these was one entitled *Design from Britain* shown in 1952.⁸³ However, the enthusiasm dwindled little by little. In 1959, the ceramist Nils Aa.

80. Knut Greve, "Foreningen brukskunst 1918-1948" in *Bonytt* Vol. 8, 1948, p 84

81. Harriet Clayhills, "Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger" in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 16-20

82. Arne Remlov, "O.B.S. Boligutstilling i Stavanger" in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 101

83. *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1952/1953 (Stavanger Museum Library) and *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1953, p xxxvi

Sivertsen was elected chairman, and as with the Kristiansand chapter, the activity level seems to have dropped considerably in the 1960s.⁸⁴

One of the first events organized by Stavanger Applied Art Association was an exhibition entitled *New Homes (Nye hjem)* which opened autumn 1947. The exhibition was produced by the Applied Art Association in Oslo and originally shown in Kristiansand in June the same year. Mounted in a former military barracks, the manifestation featured eleven fully furnished, equipped and decorated ideal rooms [Figure 6-10]. Arne Remlov reported in *Bonytt* that he hoped the Stavanger show would



Figure 6–10: Photograph from one of the interiors featured at the *New Homes (Nye hjem)* exhibition organized by Stavanger Applied Art Association in 1947. The furniture shown here are designed by Alf Sture for Hiort & Østlyngen, a protagonist designer/manufacturer couple in *Bonytt* during the 1940s. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 7, 1947)

have far-reaching consequences is so far as that “both manufacturers and craftsmen will hopefully have understood which direction people’s demands regarding household effects now are heading.”⁸⁵ Much in the same strand, Stavanger Applied Art Association on its own organized three more housing exhibitions the following years. *Build and Live 1951 (Bygge og bo 1951)* consisted of four apartment interiors designed by local designers mounted in a municipal experimental house. An accompanying booklet edited by Lexow and Ruth Thomsen—a home economics journalist in the local newspaper

84. It would have been interesting to investigate the history of Stavanger Applied Art Association (Stavanger Brukskunstforening) more closely, but unfortunately there is a source problem: The association’s archive is deposited at the Regional State Archive in Stavanger (Statsarkivet i Stavanger), but the existing material is for some reason limited to the period 1947-1950. I have therefore not found it worthwhile to pursue the matter.

85. Arne Remlov, “Utstillingen Nye hjem i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 7, 1947, p 186 (“fabrikantene så vel som håndverkerne vil forhåpentligvis ha oppfattet i hvilken retning folks krav til innbo nå går.”)

Stavanger Aftenblad—was published, intended as a “guide to the young about to set up house”.⁸⁶ Two years later, the Stavanger chapter followed up with the housing exhibitions *Live Well (Bo Bra)* and *O.B.S.*⁸⁷ Two more housing exhibitions were organized in 1955 and 1956.⁸⁸

In 1948, less than a year after its formation, the Stavanger Applied Art Association (Stavanger Brukskunstforening) could inaugurate their own permanent showroom in the basement of Stavanger Art Association’s (Stavanger Kunstforening) building.⁸⁹ Thus, like the Applied Art Association in Oslo—who had their permanent showroom in the Artists’ Exhibition Building (Kunstnernes Hus)—the Stavanger chapter had positioned itself firmly within the sphere of art. However, some of the association’s activities in this environment clearly exceeded the art sphere. One of the first exhibitions the local chapter organized on its own was the 1949 *5 Model Kitchens (5 Mønster Kjøkkener)* which was described as “presumably the most socially important of all our initiatives” and attracted 10.000 visitors in the course of one month. The five kitchens were set up by the National Information Bureau for Home Economics (Statens Opplysningskontor for Husstell), the Labour Women’s Home Economics Office (Arbeiderkvinnenes Husstellkontor), the Norwegian Society of Rural Women (Norges Bondekvinneforbund), the Norwegian Housewives’ Association (Norges Husmorforbund), and the kitchen manufacturer A/S Moderne Kjøkken.⁹⁰

Figgjo’s then newly appointed design manager and general manager Ragnar Grimsrud was a board member of the Stavanger chapter from the very start in 1947 until 1962.⁹¹ He was elected to represent the local chapter at several of the (bi-)annual meetings of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art.⁹² For a brief period, from 1949, Grimsrud also headed the local Applied Artists’ Union (Brukskunstnerlaget), the association’s sub-group for practitioners.⁹³ Its members were given a guided tour at the Figgjo factory in 1953, where Grimsrud and decor designer Aini Stangeland showed them around.⁹⁴ Furthermore, both Grimsrud and Herman Bongard—who had just been hired by Figgjo as a freelance designer—were among the lecturers when Stavanger Applied Art Association organized an evening course in interior design in 1957.⁹⁵ This clearly shows that Figgjo little by little established some connecting points with the

86. Thv. Solheim, “Bygge og bo 1951” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 60 (“veileder for unge som vil sette bo”)

87. *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1952/1953 (Stavanger Museum Library) and *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1953, p xxxvi

88. *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1955/1956 and *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1956/1957 (Stavanger Museum Library)

89. Arne Remlov, “Stavanger brukskunstforening i egne, permanente utstillingslokaler” in *Bonytt* Vol. 8, 1948, p 177

90. *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1949/1950 (Stavanger Museum Library) (“det av våre tiltak som antas å ha hatt størst sosial betydning”)

91. Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982) p 783

92. *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1948/1949 (Stavanger Museum Library) and *Bonytt*, No. 1, 1955, p xxx

93. *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1948/1949 (Stavanger Museum Library)

94. *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1952/1953 (Stavanger Museum Library) and *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1953, p xxxvi

95. *Årsberetning for Stavanger Brukskunstforening*, 1956/1957 (Stavanger Museum Library)

National Association and the propaganda machinery wheeled by Remlov and his peers, although this relation would always remain rather reserved.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen how the Norwegian design community set out to form their field and also to contribute to the shaping of society through the construction of a design discourse. One of the major traits of this discourse was the concern for finding one's own identity. The basic principles of modernism were appreciated and accepted, but they had to be appropriated and domesticated to suit the present local context. Another important part of the professional formation took the shape of a battle for hegemony among the established design professions in the wake of an increased awareness of industrial design as a distinct field.

After the war, increased freedom to travel resulted in the reception of new impressions as well as the aiming towards new horizons for the Norwegian design community. It was time to learn about new advances in design in other countries, and, as we shall see later, soon also time to present Norwegian design abroad. But new horizons did not just mean foreign adventures; it also meant making plans for organisational and promotional work in the new society about to be constructed at home. In a setting where the spirit and ethos of reconstruction at times resembled religion, the design community realised the importance of aligning their interests with the effort to build the country—at least for a while.

During the latter half of the 1940s, *Bonytt* reveals a curious flirtation with science and technology shown in the admiration for new materials, production methods and manufacturing systems. However, the applied art movement's general attitude towards mass-production remained sceptical and equivocal. Although it was at times portrayed as a marvel, it was more often considered a malady.

In relation to these sentiments, it is important to note that during these first postwar years, a massive wave of business start-ups in the manufactured goods industry swept the country in reply to the frantic shortages of consumer goods. The dubious quality and value of many of the resulting products brought about the epithet “the ashtray industry”. The ceramics industry was at the heart of this development, so when Figgjo towards the end of the decade got their first mention in *Bonytt*, it was only after a substantial re-adjustment from amateurish pottery workshop to earthenware factory. This process will be duly dealt with in the next chapters.

Section B:

Setting the table

7 Finding form: Establishing pottery production at Figgjo

7.1 Introduction

Moving from design ideology to design practice, this chapter will outline the initial phase of ceramics manufacture at the Figgjo company. How did this enterprise come into being? What kind of production and design practice was established in its initial phase? Incidentally, the Figgjo company was founded and began manufacturing pottery the very same year *Bonytt* was first published, in 1941. But the two did not move in the same circles these early years, because Figgjo was miles away from the refined handicraft studio ceramics catering to the applied art community. In fact, it was almost by sheer accident that Figgjo ended up as a pottery manufacturer at all.

The chapter begins with a brief account of how this amateurish enterprise grew up around an outdated and disused little power plant, and how it sort of drifted along into pottery production in circumstances that were far from ideal for establishing an industrial goods company. It then describes the manufacturing technology and process to better understand the core activity at Figgjo and how they set up shop. The company was not only highly amateurish, but also very small during the war years, and combined with the restrictions brought about by the war, the level of ambition was very modest in this first phase. Figgjo decided on making pottery in order to be making business and was satisfied with making do.

There is precious little documentation available regarding design strategy and practice at Figgjo during the first phase. The second half of this and the following chapter is thus based on material evidence, using product description and analysis as a tool for exploring design development and professionalization.

The homespun earliest products are testimony to an “ashtray industry” in the most literal sense of the term. However, the young company soon demonstrated a will to self-advancement. Some of earliest known products stand out in terms of design, indicating a tendency towards greater knowledge of design ideology and a more conscious concern for formal expression. Figgjo can thus be said to engage in an attempt at finding forms and testing trends.

7.2 From Power to Pottery

The history of the Figgjo power plant dates back to World War I. Times were good for farmers, because the war had led to high prices on agricultural products. Electricity as a household phenomenon was still in its youth, and represented visions of more comfortable

living, progress, and possibilities for increased efficiency and hitherto unknown ventures in most businesses—crafts, industry, and agriculture alike. Even though public electrical power networks were under rapid development in urban areas, this was not yet the case in rural districts like Figgjo.

It was under these circumstances that a small group of farmers whose land lay alongside the Figgjo river decided to build their own hydroelectric power plant and an appurtenant private power network to supply their own farms as well as others in the local community. Constructing a power plant, even such a small one, required substantial efforts—both financially and in terms of labour. The construction budget was ca NOK 100.000,-, but when the plant was operational in 1918, the total cost amounted to NOK 300.000,-. Obviously, this huge investment could easily turn into a liability if put under strain.

Despite financial difficulties and inefficient technological solutions, the little power network was extended little by little, supplying 80 subscribers in 1936. A much larger, public power plant and network, Høyland Elektrisitetsverk, was in rapid development and outdistanced the small, private company in a heartbeat. Høyland took over the unprofitable Figgjo plant in 1936, and shut it down shortly thereafter.

This could have been the end of the story, and if so, it would have been a illustrative anecdote in the history of hydroelectric power and small scale industrial development—but not much more. Our story, however, is merely the prelude to one of the most exciting adventures in Norwegian cultural, industrial, and design histories.

In 1939, two local men, Harald Lima and Sigurd Figved showed interest in the closed power plant. After negotiations, they agreed to buy the plant and the plot of land for the bargain price of NOK 5.000,- on the condition that they would not sell the electric power produced at the plant. In other words, the two entrepreneurs had to come up with some sort of a business enterprise which could exploit the power produced on site. In the time following the takeover, they played with many and very different ideas. In the meantime, World War II had started, and one of its immediate consequences for civil society was massive restrictions in the availability of raw materials for non-military production.

The decision was pottery. Why pottery, among every imaginable alternative? We can easily identify three major factors making the case for pottery: Firstly; the power plant issue. Manufacturing pottery met the condition of being a power consuming enterprise, putting the power produced at the plant to good use. Any modern manufacturing facility would need electric power, but the kilns used for baking pottery made for a business characterized by a relatively high energy consumption. So, having their own power plant seemed like a advantageous premise for manufacturing pottery.

Secondly; the raw materials issue. Pottery production would make use of raw materials that were available locally and that were not of much interest for military production and thus not restricted or rationed. The area around Sandnes town has abundant occurrences of natural blue clay. In fact, at Figgjo, the hillsides just behind the plant held large deposits of clay, but the blue clay used at the factory were to be collected at Åsland, approximately three kilometres away. Hence, both in terms of availability, logistics, business policy and politics, utilizing the local clay seemed like a good idea.

Thirdly; the competence issue. Lima and Figved had no experience from any kind of industrial production, nor any personal interest in or knowledge of pottery. But, as a direct consequence of the rich occurrences of clay mentioned above, the Sandnes district has a long standing tradition in ceramic production. This dates back to 1782, when a local man named Lauritz Smith Petersen was granted a royal privilege for the establishment of a roofing tile and brick factory at Sandnes.¹ At the time, this was the first industrial establishments between Kristiansand and Bergen. 90 years later, there were six ceramic factories in the Sandnes district alone, i.a. Graverens Teglværk and Ganns Potteri & Teglværk. Most of these and later companies manufactured both roofing tile and brick as well as pottery. Sandnæs Teglværk started manufacturing pottery as early as 1794, and several others followed their lead throughout the 19th century.² Add to this that the neighbouring town Egersund was home to three flourishing ceramic manufacturers, Eie Potteri, Damsgaard Potteri (both pottery manufacturers) and Egersund Fayancefabrik (earthenware factory), and it should be quite clear that the Rogaland district held a remarkable position when it came to ceramic production. This considerable branch tradition must have offered a sense of familiarity and security to Lima and Figved in their venturing enterprise. In addition, it meant that professional competence was highly developed and readily available in the local community. At least two of the new company's first employees, Arne Jørgensen and Stanley Salvesen, had previous experience from the local ceramic industry.³

The company Figgjo Kraftselskap A/S (Figgjo Power Company Ltd.) was founded on March 19. 1941 by Lima, Figved and Sigvart Torgersen. The name of the company suggests that it was the little power plant and its inherent potential that was the central business idea at the time—not ceramic production. However, ceramic production would become the company's sole enterprise from day one to the present. Still, the name Figgjo Kraftselskap A/S—Keramikkfabrikk (Figgjo Power Company Ltd.—Ceramics Factory) was not changed until 1949, when the company became known as Figgjo Fajanse A/S (Figgjo Earthenware Ltd.) reflecting its new identity as an earthenware factory.

Sigurd Figved became the company's first general manager (1941-46), and for the first couple of years (1941-43) he alone functioned as board.⁴ He was a local farmer's son and station master at Figgjo train station by trade. During the war, he himself trailed the district in search of building materials for the factory buildings, which were built chiefly by the company's employees. His companion and friend, Harald Lima, was chief cashier of Høyland municipal administration and proprietor of a stationery and bookshop. He was chairman of the board from 1943 until he reached the age limit for compulsory retirement in 1979. In addition, he was managing director from 1949 to 1968. Not to mention he owned 70% of the shares.

It should now be clear that this was no large-scale industrial development. Partly due to the difficulties and restrictions caused by the war, but also because the entire

1. Aksel Eggebø and Daniel Frafjord, *Det begynte med leir—Leirindustriens historie på Sandnes gjennom 200 år* (Stavanger: Dreyer, 1987) p 9

2. *Ibid.* p 99-128

3. N.N., "Harald Limas bedrift" in *Stavangeren*, 20.01.1962

4. He remained member of the board until his retirement in 1967

enterprise depended on the endeavours and investments of two private individuals with limited personal and financial resources. Although things would look a lot different a decade later, the company's undertakings in terms of production and products the first few years were in accordance with this enthusiastic and eager, but still rather amateurish, enterprise.

7.3 Setting up shop: A pottery primer

Production could start almost immediately, because two electrical chamber kilns were installed during the winter 1941-42 in the old power plant buildings and powered by the in-house power plant. During this first period, the models were made in a hen house [sic!] at Austrått while the baking took place in the kilns at Figgjo. It was not just at the manufacturing side of the enterprise that improvised and creative temporary arrangements had to be found. The distribution was rather "home made" as well; the products were sold in Harald Lima's stationery and bookshop.

From the start in 1941 and until 1949, Figgjo manufactured pottery based on extremely local resources; their own electric power, and blue clay from the nearby hillsides. When the clay was extracted from the ground and transported by horse and carriage to the factory, it was first emptied into a kneading machine, mixed with plenty of water until the mixture reached the consistency of a soup. It was then, by means of high-pressure systems pushed through fine filters, first to eliminate coarse particles and irregularities, then to dispose of excess water. The clay was then pressed into standard sized packages, now ready for processing.

All round pottery products are manufactured by turnery, non-round items are cast in moulds. In order to make each item of the same kind as identical to each other as possible, the amount of material to be employed had to be weighed out with great precision. It was then placed on the potter's wheel, balanced, flattened, before the sides were pulled up to reach the diameter, height, thickness and shape intended for the pot, jar, vase, cup, etc. in question. The clay had to be kept wet during the whole process. For accuracy and standardization purposes, the potters used stencil tools functioning as templates for the inner and outer shape of the walls. Making each item as identical as possible was primarily a practical logistics concern. Inaccuracies created problems when the products were stacked in the kiln and when they were packed for shipping.⁵

When the products had been given their shape, they were stacked in the kiln and baked. Then, they were decorated and glazed with lead glaze. The glaze made of stone powder and burned lead was colourless, but could be coloured by adding various metal oxides. After decoration and glazing, the products went back into the kiln for a second baking. This is basically the way the manufacturing of pottery was organized at Figgjo during the 1940s.

5. Eggebø and Frafjord, *op.cit.* p 137-143

The first part of the factory building was constructed during the years 1942 to 1945, bringing all stages of the ceramic production under one roof. The new facilities certainly helped in the professionalization of the budding company. The number of employees rose steadily from approximately a dozen the first few years to the tenfold at the end of the decade.

A considerable nuisance for the young enterprise was that the chamber kilns did not function as desired, and were constantly in need of repairs and maintenance. The machinery manufacturer C.H. Evensen in Fredrikstad were approached with and invitation to tender for new chamber kilns. But C.H. Evensen persuaded the management of the young ceramics manufacturer to build tunnel kilns instead of chamber kilns. Tunnel kilns, like the name might implicate, function by driving wagons loaded with products through the kilns, rather than the static baking process of the chamber kilns. Because of this, tunnel kilns are more efficient for production of larger scale.⁶ They are cheaper in operation than chamber kilns, but much more expensive to install. Construction started in 1944, and the first tunnel kiln was operational in 1946.⁷

This, and the later completion of the second tunnel kiln resulted in a drastic increase in production capacity. Also, the end of the war meant better opportunities for company investments, expansion and development of the production facilities, as well as extended distribution and retailing of the products. In the latter half of the 1940s, Figgjo went from being an *ad hoc* pottery workshop supplying the local community to a full-fledged factory and nation wide provider of ceramic goods.

This is, however, not a business history. The topic at hand is rather the role of design, both as strategy and as practice, within a corporate context—especially in such an ordinary and modest enterprise as Figgjo. However, the informality and amateurishness that characterize the early days of the company, its organization and design practice make for a research approach appropriately described as *learning from things*.⁸ It is thus time to turn to the products manufactured by Figgjo in the 1940s, with a special attention to their design. In what follows, a selection of surviving objects from the early days of the company are presented and discussed through illustrations and product descriptions. The aim is not to endorse a stylistic approach to design history, but as more conventional sources are scarce or non-existent for this first period, product description and analysis may be a tool for exploring design development—both in its own right, and as an aspect of the general professionalisation of the enterprise.

6. The introduction of tunnel kilns had revolutionized the American ceramics industry in the 1920s, as it “enhanced [production] volume to levels previously unimaginable.”: Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) p 121

7. Ulf-E. Rosenberg (ed.), *Figgjo—Formet av entusiasme gjennom 60 år, 1941-2001* (Figgjo: Figgjo AS, 2001) p 37-38

8. The phrase refers to the title of a book proficiently discussing the use of artefacts as sources: W. David Kingery (ed.), *Learning From Things—Method and Material of Material Culture Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996). This problem was discussed in chapter 3.

7.4 Making business, making pottery, making do

Plenty of work had to be done at the power plant to get it operational again, and the existing buildings were in bad need of maintenance and renovation for them to meet the demands of the new activity. Not to mention the labour and capital input required for the construction of a new factory building. Due to all these tasks, the resources available for pottery production were severely limited.⁹ Thus, during the first years, the production volume at Figgjo was very moderate. Hardly surprising though, when considering the fact that they started up during wartime, there were shortages of every kind, the staff was small, and the facilities far from ideal. But some pottery production was initiated in order to get the business off the ground.

The product range of this first period was based on utility articles for the home, such as pots, vases, bowls, platters, etc., along with the occasional novelty. The war had closed the seas for imports of such goods as well as the raw materials needed for their manufacture. For instance, the only Norwegian porcelain factory, Porsgrund, was thus deprived of crucial components such as kaolin (china clay), and made do by shifting to pottery production during the war—an *ersatz* product they proudly marketed, e.g. in *Bonytt* advertisements, as “90% Norwegian”. The demand for any kind of utility articles was tremendous, and the shortage created a seller's market of unparalleled magnitude. One did not need Porsgrund's experience in design, production and business to make saleable pottery in the 1940s. In other words, rationalized production runs, technical quality, design quality, marketing and efficient distribution were not make or brake parameters for manufacturers under the current circumstances. In this situation, Figgjo was more or less guaranteed that they would sell anything they could offer.

It is no wonder, then, that what the pottery produced during these first years bear witness to the circumstances under which they were conceived. Simple, traditional objects like ashtrays, plates, vases and jars dominated, designed and executed in styles following local pottery traditions. The quality of the designs are highly variable, from the most unappealing, clumsy, and chunky objects of questionable use value, to items of more a well-proportioned, sensible, harmonious character. Very little is known about the originators of the first designs at Figgjo. The only source which mentions anything about this is found in the product description notes from the now closed down company museum, where a mystic Mr. Andersen from Egersund is mentioned as the plausible designer of a vase.¹⁰

One of the earliest known products which has been preserved is a bowl or saucer [Figure 7-1]. It has a basic shape, with rather steeply curved sides and no flange. The form is rather agreeable, but it might seem relatively craggy and rough-hewn. The glazing is colourless and thus reveals the colour of the material. The clay in the Rogaland district contains very much iron, so after baking, it takes on a very reddish brown hue. The simple shape combined with this use of colourless glazing and the inherent colour gives the bowl a rustic, earthbound character. The decor is hand painted and consists of a

9. Henrik Haugland, *Muntre minner fra Fajansen* (Valle: Setesdalsforlaget, 1999) p 10-16

10. Product description notes from the company museum, Figgjo archives.



Figure 7–1: Bowl/saucer (pottery) Figgjo, ca 1942. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

black band along the rim and a sail boat motive in black, brown and yellow at the bottom. Such a motive represents traditional life in rural Norway in an extremely direct, obvious way, and the somewhat rugged brush strokes only emphasises this. The colouring of the decor is well-balanced and corresponds nicely with the background. Both motive and colouring add to the rustic, earthbound, but also simplistic appearance of the object.

Another, quite different product should also be mentioned [Figure 7-2]. This platter is not made by turnery, but appears to be pressed or stamped by hand force. It has an odd, uneven shape with finger-shaped dents radiating from the centre to the rim. The flange is concentrated on two sides of the platter as if to form handles, and these are shaped like three little flowers with two small leaves adjacent. The dominant colour is a fairly coppery glaze. The handle flowers are coloured ruby red and ochre yellow, and the leaves deep green, something which makes the handles seem detached from the platter. The peculiar form and glazing of this platter make it look like it could have been, should have been, or would have been made of copper rather than of clay. There are no logical or emotional connotations between material and shape—on the contrary; such a relation is resisted and opposed by the design. It certainly invokes references to kitsch and knick-knacks rather than to handicraft and utilities.



Figure 7–2: Platter (pottery) Figgjo, 1942-45. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

A product that seems completely derived of utilitarian functions is the cow-in-bowl [Figure 7-3]. It is based on a small, conventional, but sturdy bowl. But, inside it, a cow is stuck to the bottom, effectively eliminating the basic utilitarian function normally ascribed to a bowl; storage capacity. The cow is actually quite lifelike and well crafted, given the dimensions and material. But by placing it in a bowl, the effect is a double negative; the bowl becomes useless, and the cow's prospective appeal as a figurine or mantelpiece novelty is diminished and blurred.

This type of products were both common, loved and hated. Ask Burlefot, the protagonist of Agnar Mykle's 1954 novel *Lasso rundt fru Luna*, epitomizes the latter stance. As a young man in 1936/1937 he goes to a small industrial town in northern Norway to fill in as headmaster at a commercial school. Sitting in his humble assigned quarters, the ambitious young man gets depressed by its interior:

He looked at the ash-tray on the table, a porcelain bowl with a porcelain pipe baked stuck to the bottom. What was a porcelain pipe doing in an ash-tray? It was obviously a decoration, an ornament, but what good was an ornament at the bottom of an ash-tray? Would it not just make it twice as hard to keep the ash-tray clean?¹¹

It is interesting to note here, that Mykle portrayed Burlefot as a man of simple means, raised in a working class family. It was thus not a belonging to the cultural or economic



Figure 7–3: Cow-in-bowl (pottery) Figgjo, 1942-45. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

elites that made him despise such knick-knacks. His mother was an enthusiastic collector of figurines and trinkets, something which he regarded as a symbol of a petty greed and pathetic social strife. It was not cultural position, then, but cultural ambition—paired with an utterly ascetic inclination—that made Ask Burlefot hate objects such as the pipe-in-ash-tray sitting on his table and long for a home characterized by a “pure, austere beauty!”¹²

7.5 Testing trends, finding forms

The products discussed hitherto tell of an enterprise of very modest ambition and scope. These prosaic and homespun objects are testimony to an “ashtray industry” in the most literal sense of the term, emerging in less than ideal circumstances and underpinned by less than ideal expertise. However, the young company soon demonstrated a will to self-advancement. Among the earliest known products, some stand out in terms of design as they indicate a tendency towards greater knowledge of design ideology and a more

11. Agnar Mykle, *Lasso rundt fru Luna* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1954) p 221 (“Han så på askebegeret på bordet, en porselensskål med en porselens-snadde brent fast i bunnen. Hva hadde en porselens-snadde å bestille i et askebeger? Den var tydeligvis en dekorasjon, en prydgjenstand, men hva skulle man med en prydgjenstand på bunnen av et askebeger? Måtte den ikke bare gjøre det dobbelt så vanskelig å holde askebegeret rent?”)

12. *Ibid.* (“ren, streng skjønnhet!”)

conscious concern for formal expression. They can thus be seen as an inexperienced actor's early attempts at testing trends.

One such product is a cheese-dish with cover [Figure 7-4]. A cheese-dish with cover



Figure 7-4: Cheese-dish with cover (pottery) Figgjo, ca 1942. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

is arguably not the most frequently used nor the most indispensable object, but its design is interesting in several respects. The dish is completely flat, with a thick, sturdy, flangeless rim. The walls of the cover are almost vertical at the lower part, then marked with a distinct brake halfway up which is followed by a concave curve connecting the

vertical walls to the dome. A robust handle is mounted on top. In Norwegian this product type is called a “cheese bell” (*osteklokke*), and the contour of this particular exemplar does indeed evoke connotations to an archetypal bell. As such, its design can be said to make use of a formal reference to something external and unrelated to itself—a method generally held in low esteem within a modern design ethos—but it does so in a fairly undemonstrative manner.

The product is given a light, beige glaze with a rather flat finish, giving it a matt appearance. This makes it an interesting alternative to the lustrous glazing often applied to pottery products of this kind. The decor is completely non-figurative and consists of thin, painted, light green and yellow lines accentuating the geometrical features of the object. Both the design and the decoration connect the product with time-honoured pottery traditions through its unpretentious materiality and natural colours as well as with contemporary design ideology through its simple geometry and non-figurative decor. Though hardly the most refined of objects, this cheese-dish—at least compared to the cow-in-bowl discussed above—nevertheless represents one step away from the “ashtray industry” and one (small) step closer to the realm of the more respected industrial art sector.

It is hard to identify any general design principles in Figgjo’s production at the time—something which is hardly surprising; a newly established company in dearth of managerial experience can only be expected to be searching for an identity. Figgjo’s form was still very much in construction. A product indicating that the seemingly arbitrary product development and the absence of a design strategy characterizing the earliest production at Figgjo was about to assume some sort of trajectory, is the earliest tea pot that has survived [Figure 7-5]. Tea pots would for decades to come become a type of product assuming a central position in product ranges, becoming somewhat of an image-conveying and identity-constructing product. Their design would thus become a vital task and major challenge. They would also become essential in the marketing, and could therefore make or brake a new product line. A closer look at this first tea pot is thus of interest.

The pot has a very clear and evident composition. Each part of the object is manufactured separately and by different means of production—the corpus by turning, and the lid, handle and spout by casting. The design clearly shows this assemblage and technique by letting each part be shaped in its own right rather than merging these different shapes. In doing so, the design also incorporates an easy-to-read physical script describing how to use the pot. The shapes themselves indicate that you should lift the lid by the knob, that the corpus is for holding fluid, that the handle is for holding and lifting, and that the spout is for pouring.

By composition and form, this tea pot may be seen as influenced by the Art Deco style of the preceding decade. The exaggerated geometrical differentiation of shape for the different parts and the affection for accentuating details like the knob of the lid were characteristic traits of Art Deco. Our tea pot’s little spherical lid knob with its highlighting golden glaze and the ribbed corpus thus becomes a reminiscence of this luxurious trend. These connotations are, however, strongly opposed by the rugged materiality and imprecise, drooping glaze lending a rough, rustic feel to the pot,



Figure 7-5: Tea pot (pottery) Figgjo, 1942-46. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

something which also connects it with the identity of other early Figgjo products. Such a feature has nothing to do with the refined finish so characteristic of Art Deco, but seems more related to the Arts & Craft tradition. Conventional Art Deco ceramic objects are, by contrast, made of more exclusive materials and decorated with sharp, precise patterns in bright colours and lustrous glazing. Nora Gulbrandsen's designs for Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik during the 1930's might serve as fascinating examples in that respect [Figure 7-6].¹³ Wartime restrictions put an end to porcelain production, forcing Gulbrandsen and Porsgrund to make do with less refined ceramic materials for a while. But even Gulbrandsen's more rugged pottery for Porsgrund still seems far finer than Figgjo's somewhat "homespun" products from the same period. More important than the veracity of these speculations on sources of inspiration is the very fact that one and the same product may evoke stylistic resemblances of such different nature as Art Deco and Arts & Craft can be seen as an expression of the company's unclarified identity. Figgjo was, one might say, in a process of testing trends and finding forms.

A few years after the tea pot first was manufactured, a breakfast service with the same or a very similar glazing (brown, with black, drooping stripes arbitrarily applied to the corpus) was introduced [Figure 7-7]. The design of these cups and plates are very simple

13. Alf Bøe, *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år, 1885-1965* (Porsgrunn & Oslo: Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik & J. Grundt Tanums forlag, 1967) p 175-219. For more on Nora Gulbrandsen's designs for Porsgrund, see: Alf Bøe, *Nora Gulbrandsen på Porsgrund* (Oslo: Huitfeldt, 1994) and Steen Ory Bendtzen, *Nora Gulbrandsen—design for Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik 1927-1937* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2001)



Figure 7-6: Covered dish and bonbonnière (China) Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik, 1929 and 1932-33. Designer: Nora Gulbrandsen. (Photo from W. Halén (ed.), *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996))



Figure 7-7: Breakfast service (pottery) Figgjo, 1945-48. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

and unpretentious. The plain, unadorned forms seem to render this product more attuned to the teachings of the applied art movement (*brukskunstbevegelsen*)—although there were no direct connections between Figgjo and the national applied art community in this first phase. But the most interesting thing about this breakfast service is that it is the first example of what would forevermore become Figgjo's principal product type—the service.

Like the cheese-dish and the tea pot, the breakfast service display evidence of heritage from ancient pottery tradition while at the same time exhibiting a formal language strongly influenced by some of the leading design conventions of its own times. A more coherent and ambitious design practice came about with the managed development towards professionalization and expansion of the company after the war. The henhouse, power plant and book-shop operation might have done the trick in the make-do environment of wartime occupation, but such a set-up would hardly make for a viable business venture in anything resembling a normal market situation.

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen how Figgjo was established in 1941 as a highly amateurish pottery workshop, operating out of a hen house, a power plant and a book shop. The company was set up, in unfavourable circumstances during wartime occupation, by two local entrepreneurs with no experience neither with industry nor ceramics. So, the fact that they ended up managing a pottery manufacturer was partly circumstance, partly due to the local traditions for ceramic industry—certainly not due to design expertise.

Since this was the first encounter with Figgjo in this study, a little pottery primer was required in order to get familiar with the kind of production and design carried out at this company. Slowly but surely, the plant and manufacturing facilities were expanded and improved, epitomised by the construction of the first tunnel kiln from 1944 to 1946. Resulting in a vast increase in manufacturing capacity, this can be said to be the first step towards industrialised production, but during the first years both the volume and the quality of Figgjo's output was modest.

In the earliest period, the production consisted of unassuming utility articles for the home, along with the occasional knick-knack and novelty. As the level of experience and expertise in the company rose somewhat, products of a more deliberate design and demonstrating a more conscious concern for formal expression began to appear. Still, the design repertoire remained incoherent and eclectic, suggesting that Figgjo was testing trends and finding forms. The next chapter will trace the further professionalisation and industrialisation of Figgjo and its design strategy and practice.

8 Forms in formation: New ambitions in pottery design

8.1 Introduction

In the mid-1940s Figgjo expanded considerably, constructing a modern production plant, multiplying their workforce and investing heavily in manufacturing machinery. This chapter follows the professionalisation of the Figgjo company in the formative period on their way to becoming a factory. How was this process reflected in the company's production and design? Did new ambitions in design succeed in moving Figgjo away from the disparaged "ashtray industry" and closer to the sphere of industrial or applied art? Although industrial production of earthenware did not begin until 1949, the years leading up to that pivotal moment represent a period of gradual growth and preparation. Both in terms of company policy and design strategy, we will here investigate forms in formation.

After the war Figgjo was gearing up and going pro. The decision to turn the enterprise from a pottery workshop into an earthenware factory was made in 1946. This chapter starts out by discussing some of the preparatory work in this procedure, focusing in particular on the professionalisation of the management and design staff. While expanding and preparing for earthenware production, this new design expertise greatly improved the pottery production, which was kept up until the shift could be made. This chapter takes a closer look at some of these objects, exploring their design as a way of understanding the professionalisation of the company and its product development. While it was hardly comparable to the high-quality handicraft studio ceramics generally favoured by the applied art community, this intermediate production at Figgjo certainly was of a much higher quality than the first output discussed in the previous chapter.

The last half of this chapter is devoted to the presentation of the person who more than any other single actor influenced both the design strategies and design practice at Figgjo for almost three decades following his employment in 1946; general manager and design manager Ragnar Grimsrud. When he came to Figgjo he was already an experienced ceramist, designer and design manager, something which will be scrutinised in some detail.

8.2 Gearing up, going pro

The end of World War II in 1945 did not by any means mitigate the frenetic demand for all kinds of utility articles. If anything, it augmented it. This was of course good news to the entire manufacturing industry—provided that they managed to make enough products to satisfy the demand. Figgjo had worked hard during the war years to convert the

production facilities from a worn-down and outdated power plant into a modern ceramics factory, while at the same time implementing production in provisional facilities under severely defiant conditions. In 1945 the first construction stage of the new factory building was completed, and in 1946 the first of the two tunnel kilns was operational. This drastically increased the company's production capacity. It is also clear that by now, the manufacturing staff, largely consisting of young, local boys supplemented by the odd person with some experience from the local ceramic industry, had gained more practice in and knowledge about pottery production.

Also, both management and design staff were supplemented, professionalised and reinforced with new and competent personnel. Ragnar Grimsrud was appointed to the dual position as general manager and design manager of the company in 1946.¹ He was a ceramist with great experience from other ceramic factories such as Graverens and Egersund Fayancefabrik, and would become the undisputed key figure in Figgjo's product strategy and design until his retirement in 1973.² It was an unusual decision to make a craftsman designer general manager of an industrial company, but it certainly made for a product-driven activity. And Grimsrud's extensive knowledge resulted in a great leap forward when it came to technical and design quality of the products.

Other main characters who would strongly influence Figgjo's product development and design over the next decades also started their careers with the company in the first postwar years; head foreman Elvor Berge, sales manager Harald Torgersen, modeller and designer Jørg Løve Nielsen and graphic designer Rolf Frøyland.³ Furthermore, the head of the decor department at the time, Finnish-born Aini Stangeland had other female Finnish decor designers come join her at Figgjo from the Arabia factory.⁴ It was probably the prospects of higher salaries and standard of living which made Paula Ratula, Anja Jurikala and Maria Husainov leave their native Finland for Norway and Figgjo.⁵

Already in 1946, the management decided that Figgjo should make a major change in production technology and product strategy. Pottery made from local blue clay might have cut it as an emergency solution for wartime shortages, but it would not in a future-oriented ceramics factory striving for mass production. Faience, or earthenware, was the future. But such a change was not achieved in a heartbeat. Earthenware production would not commence until 1949, and until then, Figgjo continued to refine its pottery.

One rather curious example of these first, new pottery products is a vase [Figure 8-1]. Its shape is quite stout with a plump corpus base and an abrupt narrowing at the neck,

1. The current term for *design manager* at the time was *art director (kunstnerisk leder)*, but since *art director* now is more commonly associated with advertising and graphic design, I prefer to use *design manager*.

2. For more on Grimsrud, see biographical section below.

3. Løve Nielsen was hired in 1948, whereas Frøyland was hired in 1945 after having worked at a competing pottery, Ganns Potteri & Teglværk, during the war: Jørg Løve Nielsen in conversation with the author, 01.03.2006 and Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006

4. Aini Stangeland was married to a local man, and had lived in Norway since childhood: T.F., "Høylandsfrue med polarflyet til California" in *Sandnes & Jærens Avis*, 10.12.1954. The other three, however, came to Figgjo specifically for the work: N.N., "Rogaland blir sentrum i landets fajanseproduksjon" in one of the local newspapers, 1947 or 1948 (date and name of the paper left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive)

5. Ulf-E. Rosenberg (ed.), *Figgjo—Formet av entusiasme gjennom 60 år, 1941-2001* (Figgjo: Figgjo AS, 2001) p 40-41



Figure 8–1: Vase (pottery) Figgjo, 1946-49. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

resulting in very squarish shoulders and an unproportionally short neck. But it is the decor which is most interesting about this vase. The pattern is emphasized in relief and given a dark brown colour, while the background is glazed white. The relief consists partly of ribbons marking the geometry of the object, but also of surface decor patterns. The surface decor pattern applied to the neck is abstract, while those on the corpus are two alternating conventionalized floral motifs based on a bush and leaves respectively. Both abstract relief decor and conventionalized floral motifs would become important elements in the decor design at Figgjo for a long time to come, but the combination of the two as seen in this vase was never to be seen again.

What seems to be the first preserved product with no decor whatsoever is a green jug [Figure 8-2]. It has a wide, almost spherical corpus and a short, almost cylindrical neck. These two distinct geometrical elements are formally held together by the handle, which springs outward from the top of the neck, curves gently downwards and is joined to the corpus at its waist in a somewhat odd and clumsy fashion. But compared to the earlier Figgjo products, the design of this jug represented a distinct development in terms of

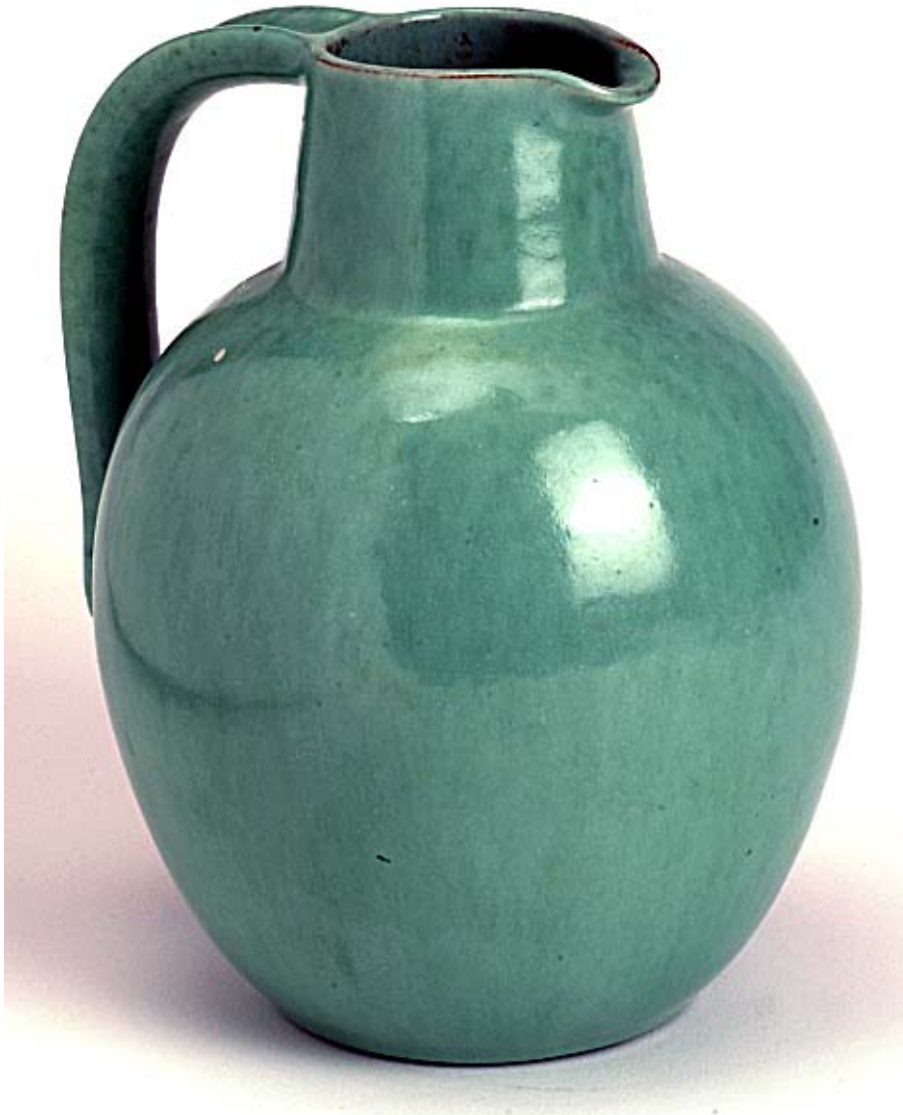


Figure 8–2: Jug (pottery) Figgjo, 1946-49. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

formal treatment, composition, quality and finish. The glazing is a lustrous, slightly speckled sea green. This gives the jug a much more elegant and distinguished look and feel than the earlier, more rustic products.

It is a fair assumption that this jug is designed by Ragnar Grimsrud, shortly after his arrival at Figgjo in 1946. In some regards the design might be said to resemble the formal language Grimsrud applied to one of his most central works at Egersund Fayancefabrik, the service *Åsa* from 1934 [Figure 8-3]. The pitchers from this service have the same sturdy, round shapes that the Figgjo jug portrays. There is nothing revolutionary about its design, quite the contrary given its roots in the 1930's. But the delicate handling of a rather brute material like blue clay and the elegant glazing bear



Figure 8-3: Pitchers from the *Åsa* service (earthenware) Egersund Fayancefabrik, 1934. Design: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photo from I. Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991))

witness of a new and more refined and competent approach to design than what had existed at Figgjo up until this point.

Another example of this new and more somewhat more sophisticated attitude towards blue clay pottery design is a red vase or jug [Figure 8-4]. It has a large, spherical corpus topped by a very short neck. The handle, on the other hand, is almost abnormally solid and thick. Combined, these traits give the jug an unusual silhouette, and the oddness of its geometrical composition does probably also diminish the products usability. But this particular jug's function is arguably as much that of offering aesthetic pleasures as that of being a vehicle for transport of liquids. Its function, or purpose if you will, as adornment is emphasised by the decor.

The glazing is purple red, like wine or eggplants. The colouring has many nuances, applied in horizontal circles. This warm, rich surface is then broken up by many little circles intagliated in the clay. The foundation (and inside) glazing is white, so the little intagliated circles become white. Then, they are partially filled with a black line. This original and striking decor completes the overall impression of a product that decidedly outshone its predecessors in terms of artistic value, but the jug's usability seems rather dubious.

Another tea pot [Figure 8-5] might also serve to describe the drastic development in Figgjo's pottery design in the mid- to late 1940's. This pot has more or less the same

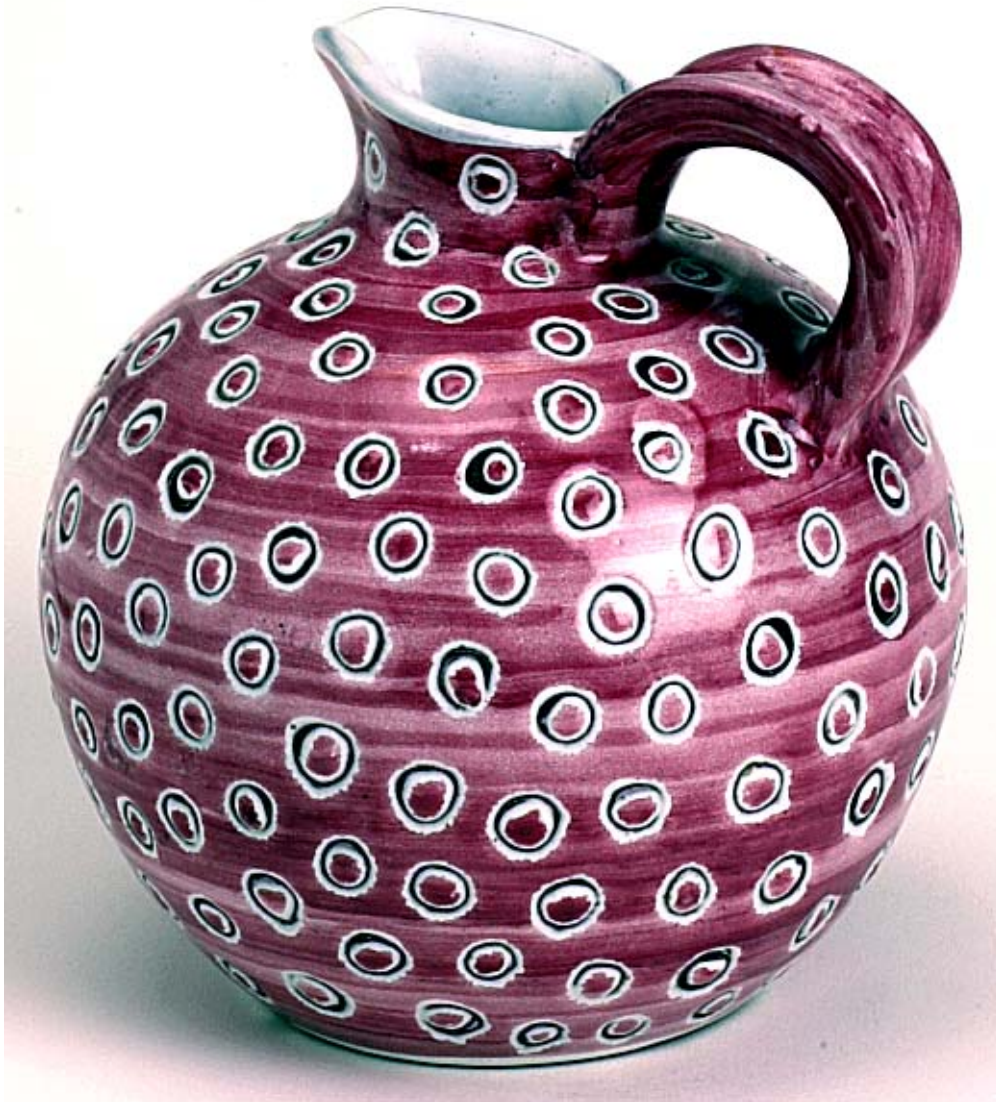


Figure 8-4: Vase/Jug (pottery) Figgjo, 1946-48. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

configuration as the one analysed above [Figure 7-5], but the product identity is completely different. The shape of this one is more rounded; both each compositional element in itself—especially the corpus, but also the composition as a whole has a much softer, more unified form.

While the decor of the first tea pot was dark and rather gloomy, this one is bright and vivacious. The base of the corpus, the underside of the spout and the inside of the handle have a yellowish, light green colour and a grid-like pattern engraved, resulting in white lines breaking up the surface. The semi-spherical upper part of the corpus, the top side of the spout and the outside of the handle have a sky-blue glaze with a pattern of white trefoils. The lid is ochre with thin, white, radial lines. This distinct partition of the corpus by means of the decor might seem rather quaint, and the application of the decor is quite imprecise. Still, this tea pot displayed a new exuberance in decor design.



Figure 8–5: Tea pot (pottery) Figgjo, 1946-49. Designer unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

Representing the last stage of pottery production at Figgjo, I have chosen a fruit dish which may be understood as the very embodiment of the company’s new, more progressive design strategy and professional design staff [Figure 8-6]. The dish is made by stencil turnery. It has a relatively small, recessed centre and a wide flange. The flange is sectioned into six parts by raised divisors and demarcated from the centre by a brim which also alters the curvature.

The base glazing is semi-gloss white. The centre is decorated with six conventionalized leaves, alternating three pink and three deep blue, radiating from a golden dot. The flange is adorned with twelve blue-grey, cordiform leaves, placed diagonally in pairs within each of the six parts. It is interesting to note that the technique of braking up the glazing by intagliating little circles in the clay is used also on this dish, as it was on the red jug discussed above [Figure 8-4]. (This might support the assumption that these two products have identical originators).

The design by Ragnar Grimsrud—one of his first known designs at Figgjo—is concise and assured, but the very severe demarcations of the flange and between flange and centre seem to disparage the formal unity of the product without any evident constructional, utilitarian, or functional arguments for doing so. The decor, probably by one of the finnish designers—Aini Stangeland, Paula Ratula or Anja Jurikala—only emphasises this partitive shape. But the precise finish and warm, delicate colouring of the glaze exhibit some of the same qualities as the red jug.

This dish’s intriguing, but variable quality and inconsistency in formal expressions render it a good and at least reasonably representative product to sum up the pottery



Figure 8–6: Fruit Dish (pottery) Figgjo, 1946-48. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decor designer: Unknown. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

production at Figgjo. At this stage, in the late 1940's, Figgjo left pottery production behind in favour of earthenware. This was part of their strategy to move from a craft workshop to an industrial factory. But before we move on to follow this development, let us sidestep for a moment.

During the pottery period, the production at Figgjo was quite similar both in production methods, material quality and formal language to what some of the entirely craft-based ceramic studios did at this time. If we compare some Figgjo pottery products from the late 1940's like the vase/jug [Figure 8-4], the tea pot [Figure 8-5] and the fruit dish [Figure 8-6] with a jug designed and made by the Bergen based studio ceramists Alf and Kari Rongved [Figure 8-7], we find many interesting resemblances (I should perhaps

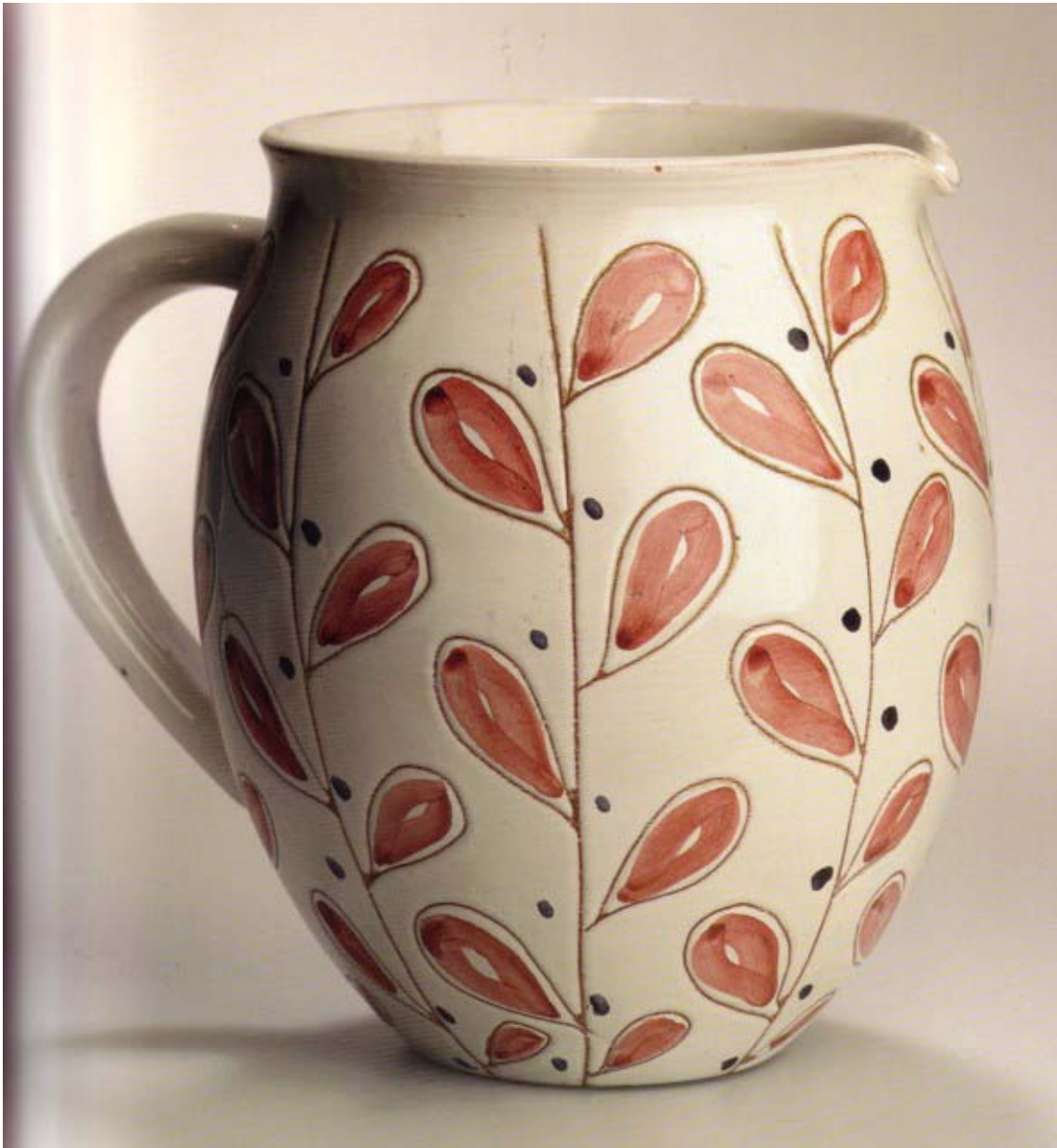


Figure 8-7: Jug (pottery) ca. 1950. Design and manufacture by Alf and Kari Rongved. Photo from N. Malterud and A.B. Ylvisåker (eds.), *Burning Point Bergen—Ceramics 1950-2000* (Bergen: Kunsthøgskolen i Bergen and Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, 2002))

stress that what I am interested in with these comparisons is the employment of certain

design features, not the quality of their application). First, all these artefacts are characterized by full, round, buxom forms. The white base glazing is the same on the Rongved jug as it is on the fruit dish. The broad, sturdy handle is quite similar on the Rongved jug as it is on the tea pot. The simple, conventionalized leaves adorning the Rongved jug are much alike those on the tea pot, and their warm toned colouring is highly reminiscent of the red jug and the fruit dish.

Alf and Kari Rongved got their training as ceramists in Denmark, and set up their studio outside Bergen after World War II. They joined the local chapter of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst) in Bergen, which was founded in 1946. As young, enthusiastic, independent and newly established craftsmen, they were looking forward to expressing their artistic ambitions through experimental, avant-garde ceramics. But it soon dawned on them that they had to make concessions in order to survive.

The jug shown here can be seen as a trade-off between the ideologist artists and the commercialist retailers: The retailers had very little faith in the more avant-garde work the young artisans had shown—the market was dominated by traditional pottery with naturalistic floral decor. The Rongveds thus tried to adapt to the market, but at the same time keeping their artistic integrity.⁶ As we have seen, this battle, or quest to conquer the general public, the retailers, and thus the market in the name of good taste, became one of the main objectives of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art in the time to come. It comprised all branches of manufacture, but one of the hot spots of the debate in the late 1940's was studio ceramics.⁷ For our objective, it is very interesting to see how closely related studio ceramics in this period is to the production at a Figgjo on the verge of industrial production.

But before we continue tracing the trajectory of Figgjo's venture at industrial earthenware production, we should get better acquainted with one of the principal actors of this process, Ragnar Grimsrud—the company's general manager, design manager and designer for 27 years, and also the embodiment of the link from workshop ceramics to industrial earthenware (and later vitreous porcelain) factory.

8.3 Directing design: Ragnar Grimsrud

When Ragnar Grimsrud joined Figgjo in March 1946, he was 43 years old and already a well-established and reputable ceramist and designer. He had been in the business for 21 years—a long, turbulent period which saw great changes in society at large as well as in design ideology and practice, and which obviously contributed strongly in moulding him both as person and as professional. Who was this person taking over as general manager, design manager and chief designer? In order to understand his crucial role at Figgjo for

6. Nina Malterud and Anne Britt Ylvisåker, *Burning Point Bergen—Ceramics 1950-2000* (Bergen: Kunsthøgskolen i Bergen and Vestlandske Kunsthøyskolemuseet, 2002) p 24-28

7. For more on Norwegian studio ceramics, see Randi Gaustad and Gunnar Danbolt, *Samtidskeramikk: Norsk keramikk fra 1940 til i dag* (Oslo: Dreyer, 1990)

two and a half decades, it is vital to step back for a while and examine his background and career up to 1946.⁸

Ragnar Grimsrud was born on September 12, 1902 in Drammen. His father, a shipmaster, died the same year in an accident outside the African coast. To provide for Ragnar and his three older brothers, their mother took a job in an office. However, misfortune seemed to haunt the family. One of the elder brothers, Einar, got tuberculosis and died prematurely at the age of 20. Ragnar himself caught pleurisy, something which caused the family to move to Minnesund at Eidsvoll and its inland climate in 1919.

The boy showed musical and artistic interests from an early age, but it was not until after the move to Minnesund he pursued these. Here, he met the illustrator and painter Torleif Rud, who—being childless—took Grimsrud under his wing. He tutored the young man through private tuition from 1920 to 1924, and must have had a significant impact on Grimsrud's choice of career. It was on Rud's advice that he applied and was admitted to the graphic arts class (grafikerklassen) at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) in 1924.

Grimsrud soon realized that making a livelihood as a graphic artist would be quite a challenge, and that alternative sources of income probably would be necessary. After seeing an exhibition of pottery by the sculptor and ceramist Jacob Nevedal at Blomquist art dealer in the spring of 1925, he got an idea. He was not at all impressed by the quality of Nevedal's pottery, but was surprised to learn that the better part of the exhibited products were sold. This spurred a new belief in Grimsrud that a livelihood based on artistic activity might be possible after all—but maybe in another field. If Nevedal could make a living out of this, Grimsrud was sure he could too.

Already in the fall 1925, he started working on establishing his own pottery studio at Minnesund. A local blacksmith helped him construct a simple, wood-burning kiln. Being trained in graphic art, Grimsrud had never worked with clay before. The whole project must therefore be considered audacious at best, bordering on foolhardy. But he set to work with great determination and dedication. He studied ceramic technical literature to learn about material, process and manufacture. This new, theoretical knowledge was supplemented with practical experience obtained through the time-honoured method of trial and error. Equipped with this grounding comprised of private tuition in drawing and painting, formal education in graphic art, and autodidact ceramic skills, Ragnar Grimsrud embarked on a 48 years long career in ceramic design.

Grimsrud's work appeared in an environment where the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst), formed in 1918, already had assumed the position as the leading opinion-forming institution in terms of information, promotion, propagation, and value- and quality assessment in the field of applied art, design and interior architecture. From the very beginning, Grimsrud's production conformed to a large extent with the Applied Art Association's (Foreningen Brukskunst) ideology. His immediate acceptance and respect in this community was absolutely crucial to get his career going. His work

8. This section is predominantly based on the research done by art historian Ivar Stranger in connection with the exhibition *Keramikerne Ragnar Grimsrud* and the appurtenant catalogue: Ivar Stranger, *Keramikerne Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991)

was thoroughly exposed through the Association's exhibitions and the other vehicles of propaganda at their disposal.⁹

The first public appearance of Grimsrud's studio ceramics was at an exhibition organized by the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) at Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) in the spring of 1927.¹⁰ Grimsrud's products were referred to in several of the national newspapers' reviews of the exhibition, among them *Tidens Tegn*, *Aftenposten* and *Dagbladet*. *Dagbladet* applauded his unpretentious terracotta products as a fresh, new contribution to the Norwegian scene, but suggested that his design was influenced by the simple geometric formal language of the Viennese *Jugendstil* and the secessionists.¹¹ *Aftenposten*'s critic, Hans Petter L'Orange,¹² spoke highly of what he characterized as a simple and affordable coffee service.¹³ This was probably the first service Grimsrud ever made, and this product category were to become the dominant one throughout his career. So, this instant appraisal must have been encouraging. In addition, reviews like these must have been considered to be just what the doctor ordered as far as the Applied Art Association was concerned.

The real breakthrough, however, came the following year, when Grimsrud presented his own little stand at the applied art section of the *National Exhibition* (Landsutstillingen) of 1928 in Bergen. This exhibition is often seen as the first major manifestation of modernist aesthetics in Norway. And the programme manifesto of the applied art section stated quite unmistakable what the exhibition's ambitions and ideological standpoint were:

The section accepts only applied art (handicraft and industrial art) produced in Norway and which has a modern artistic and technologically adequate form, copies and works in old styles are excluded completely.¹⁴

Ragnar Grimsrud's exhibited products seemed, like those of most of his fellow exhibitors, to draw inspiration from several of the different dominating trends of the day, like continental functionalism, art deco, cubism, secessionism and classicism.¹⁵ In other words; Norwegian modernism had already at this stage assumed many different, but yet officially "approved" faces or expressions—both on general and individual levels.

Grimsrud's presence at the exhibition caught the eye of several of the leading figures of the applied art community. Thor Kielland, director of the Oslo Museum of Decorative

9. Randi Gaustad, *Foreningen Brukskunst 1918-1930: Program, utstillinger og kritikk* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1973) p 95 & 140

10. Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982) p 783

11. *Dagbladet*, 23.04.1927

12. Hans Petter L'Orange was later to become professor of art history and archaeology.

13. *Aftenposten*, 23.04.1927

14. Thor Kielland, "Brukskunstavdelingen" in Christen Gran Bøgh, *et al.* (eds.), *Landsutstillingen i Bergen 1928: Reiseliv, sport, hotellvesen, husflid, brukskunst: Beretning* (Bergen: Grieg, 1929) p 376 ("I avdelingen medtaes kun brukskunst (kunsthåndverk og kunstindustri) som er fremstillet i Norge og som har en moderne kunstnerisk og teknisk forsvarlig form, kopier og arbeider i gamle stilarter utelukkes helt.")

15. Stranger, *op.cit.* p 12-13

Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) described his work as “lacking perfect technique”, but nevertheless “blissfully... modernistic”,¹⁶ and the Swedish critic Gustaf Munthe simply stated that Grimsrud was “the best among the fayance artists”.¹⁷

This reception resulted in unforeseen possibilities. As early as August 1928, his newly fledged patron and advocate—the very same Kielland—communicated a special offer to Grimsrud. He was offered a permanent position as ceramist and designer at Graverens Teglverk in Sandnes.¹⁸ In this connection it is worth mentioning that Kielland, together with his friend Jacob Prytz—who was chairman of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst), did so with other promising designers as well. Around the same time, they convinced Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik to hire Nora Gulbrandsen as chief designer, and persuaded Christiania Glasmagasin and Hadeland Glassverk to hire Sverre Pettersen.¹⁹ These cunning network operations were part of a very deliberate strategy on behalf of the Applied Art Association as a means to strengthen their influence on the development of industrial production through the positioning of sympathetically minded craftsmen/designers within the manufacturing industry.²⁰ Grimsrud accepted the position as ceramist and designer at Graveren, and his wife Elsa got a post as chief decorator. Whether their decision was influenced by the fact that Grimsrud’s studio at Minnesund had just burned to the ground is probable, but not confirmed.

Graverens Teglverk was a manufacturer of traditional ceramic industrial products, like bricks, roofing tiles, draining pipes, etc. Business was slow in the mid 1920’s, and their newly employed chief engineer Andreas Røjen was sent to Germany on a study tour to examine possible new product areas. While there, he was sitting in on classes at Keramische Fachhochschule in Hoer. In 1926, Graverens Teglverk bought Hana & Holmens Potterier. With him home from Germany, Røjen brought technical knowledge of pottery production as well as a ceramist named Willy Albouts who became Graverens’ first pottery design manager. But Albouts soon returned to Germany, and this is where Grimsrud entered the field.²¹

Like Nora Gulbrandsen’s work early work for Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik, Grimsrud’s work at Graverens seems far more inspired by the ennobling Art Deco style

16. Kielland, *op.cit.* p 394 (“Mangel på fullkommen teknikk”, “velsignet ... modernistisk”)

17. Gustaf Munthe, “Norsk konstindustri” in *Svenska slöjdföreningens tidsskrift*, No. 25, 1929, p 64 (Den bästa bland fajanskontnäarna”) It seems a bit strange that Munthe used the term “fayance” here, as Grimsrud’s material was blue clay pottery.

18. Stranger, *op.cit.* p 14-15

19. Alf Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963) p 42 and Inger Helene N. Stemshaug, “Sverre Pettersen—En modernismens industridesigner” in Widar Halén (ed.), *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996) p 29

20. Alf Bøe, *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år, 1885-1965* (Porsgrund & Oslo: Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik & J. Grundt Tanums forlag, 1967) p 175-177

21. Aksel Eggebø and Daniel Frafjord, *Det begynte med leir—Leirindustriens historie på Sandnes gjennom 200 år* (Stavanger: Dreyer, 1987) p 126-127. A rather intriguing curiosity regarding experiences made and networks constructed at Graverens is that chief engineer Andreas Røjen’s brother in law, Trygve Brekke worked at Graverens from 1927 and was as such Grimsrud’s colleague. He graduated from the Staatliche Cheramische Ingenieurschule in Coblenz, Germany, in 1931, and was hired by Egersund Fayancefabrik in 1937. Brekke was later (1946-1949) to found and direct (until 1963) Stavangerflint—at first Grimsrud and Figgjo Fajanse’s fierce rival for twenty years, and then their merged partner: Lz., “Stavangerflint” in *Stavangeren* 30.03.1963

than the serene and pietistic functionalism. This tendency in Grimsrud's work in the interwar years is so emphatic that he in Kaare Stang's book on Art Deco in Norway is presented as one of the protagonists of this style in Norway alongside Gulbrandsen and glass designer Sverre Pettersen.²² But, as mentioned above, Gulbrandsen and Porsgrunds' material—porcelain—was better suited to this formal language than the Grimsrud and Graverens' blue clay pottery.

Nevertheless, Grimsrud designed some impressively elegant products for Graverens, like a white coffee pot [Figure 8-8]. The shape of this pot is quite remarkable. The corpus



Figure 8–8: Coffee pot (pottery) Graverens, 1932. Design: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photo from I. Stranger, *Keramikerne Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991))

is asymmetric—the front of it rising towards the spout in a straight line angled slightly forward, while the back side and top constitute a continuous curve—making the pot seem like it is leaning forward and upward, reaching for the sky and the future in an almost aggressive way. Grimsrud often gave pots and jugs dynamic shapes and argued that this was because such products—as opposed to “static” products like e.g. vases—are meant to be moved and the design should express this intention.²³ The design of this pot reveals a very interesting symbiosis: the physical script reads upward/forward *movement*, and the socio-technical script reads *progress*.²⁴ It has an ivory white, high lustre glaze

22. Kaare Stang, *Art Deco i Norge* (Oslo: Press, 2005) p 44-47

23. I. Holmboe Münsterhjelm, “Modelløren og tegneren Ragnar Grimsrud” in *Urd*, No. 21, 1934, p 577-578

which gives the pot an aura of elegance and luxury very rarely found in pottery products. One might be led to believe it is made of more exclusive materials. The lid and knob is, by contrast, black. This is a dramatic effect which makes the lid an eye-catcher and focal point, lending heaps of character to an otherwise calm surface.

Another coffee pot might serve as an example of the more mundane products [Figure 8-9]. This pot has a large, cylindrical corpus onto which the other elements—spout, handle, lid and base—are built in an additive manner. The glazing is greyish white with dark accentuating ribbons. The handpainted decor is an assembly of abstracted natural elements. It seems to be strongly influenced by cubist painting, and must thus be characterized as highly *en vogue* at the time. But it fails to convey any purpose beyond ornamentally occupying the extensive surface.

In order to better illustrate the wide range of different interpretations of modernist ideas Grimsrud included in his repertoire, one additional pot which in many ways is more representative than the two discussed above should be mentioned [Figure 8-10]. The shape of this one is extremely distinct and geometrically defined. The corpus is a perfect semi-sphere, with a corresponding semi-spherical handle on top, a flat lid with a flat knob, and a short, straight spout. The glazing is two-toned. The handle and lid are beige, while the corpus and spout are white. The beige is apparently applied first, because it shines through the white on the upper part of the corpus where the white glaze has been allowed to crackle. Both the shape, the materiality and the glazing technique of this pot might resemble some of the work carried out at the pottery workshop at the Bauhaus school's Weimar period in the 1920's by Theodor Bogler et. al., but whether Grimsrud had any knowledge of this work is uncertain—although not implausible.²⁵

After a struggling first few years, Graverens pottery production became increasingly successful from around 1930 onwards, both in terms of production volume, market penetration, and reputation in the applied art community. The product range had been extended considerably, keeping Grimsrud very busy. The number of employees escalated from 20-30 in 1928 to 70 in 1937.²⁶ Also, the dealer network was enlarged to encompass most major cities.

The first and most explicit evidence of professional acknowledgement came in the wake of their contribution to the so-called *Lottery Exhibition (Lotteriutstillingen)* at Håndverkeren in Oslo the autumn of 1930. The art historian Anders Bugge (who became professor at the University of Oslo from 1936) claimed in his review of the exhibition that Graverens pottery products held a very high standard and at this point even outshone

24. The tendency of making such a connection between upward/forward movement and progress is probably rooted in a way of structuring experience through metaphorical terms that are shaped by how we as humans conceptualise ourselves and our surroundings: "Since people typically function in an *upright* position, see and move *forward*, spend most of their time performing *actions*, and view themselves as being basically *good*, we have a basis in our experience for viewing ourselves as more UP than DOWN, more FRONT than BACK, more ACTIVE than PASSIVE, more GOOD than BAD.": George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) p 132

25. for Bauhaus pottery, see e.g. Magdalena Droste, *Bauhaus 1919-1933* (Köln: Taschen, 1990) p 68-72 and Cornelia von Buol, "The Ceramics Workshop" & "Japan and the Bauhaus Pottery" in Jeannine Fiedler and Peter Feierabend (eds.), *Bauhaus* (Köln: Könemann, 1999) p 438-451

26. Eggebø and Frafjord, *op.cit.* p 128



Figure 8–9: Coffee pot (pottery) Graverens, 1934. Design: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photo from I. Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991))

the earthenware products from Egersund Fayancefabrik.²⁷ Another mark of respect in the applied art community was that the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts

27. *Morgenposten*, 25.10.1930



Figure 8–10: Mocha pot (pottery) Graverens, 1934. Design: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photo from I. Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991))

(Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) after this exhibition made their first purchase of pottery from Graverens.

In 1932, Grimsrud won second prize in the ceramics category (no first prize awarded) of the Applied Art Association’s competition for “best form” in various materials.²⁸ The winning product was a tall, black jar or vase of a distinctively neo-classicist character. This can be seen as a confirmation that neo-classicism in the interwar years was accepted, even favoured, by the Applied Art Association as a progressive and exemplary formal language on a level with other expressions, like e.g. Art Deco and functionalism, within the broader ideological framework of modernism. The most fascinating lesson learned for our purpose, however, is that one and the same designer, working within the scope of one and the same manufacturer, can develop products of such vastly different character, pursuing multiple design expressions based on several highly disparate and at times even opposing ideological foundations.

At Graverens, Grimsrud learned to cultivate a kind of modern design that also appealed to the buying public, resulting not only in critical acclaim, but in commercial success as well.²⁹ The success of Graverens and Grimsrud was noticed also among the competition. Obviously impressed—and maybe even slightly intimidated—by what had been achieved at Graverens, the “big brother” of the Rogaland district’s ceramic

industry, Egersund Fayancefabrik hired both Elsa and Ragnar Grimsrud in 1933. He was to join their design team, and the management trusted him to promote new product ideas for the reputable and distinguished company.

Graverens might have expanded and flourished, but the fact remained that the production facilities were a far cry from an industrialized factory—it was more like a enlarged and enhanced pottery workshop. Egersund Fayancefabrik, on the other hand, was a much more industrialized business both in terms of organizational structure, design management, production technology and material technology. While he at Graverens did much of the actual manufacture by blue clay turnery himself, his tasks took a much more abstract and detached turn at Egersund where he drew sketches and designed models in plaster to be executed in the white earthenware mass.³⁰ Industrial mass production with its principals of the division of labour had caught up with Grimsrud the craftsman and ceramist. In short, he went from hands-on craftsman to projecting designer.

One of Grimsrud's first designs for Egersund was a jug, intended for wine [Figure 8-11]. It has a couple of highly characterizing features: a lip- or beak-shaped spout and a circular handle mounted high up in a very detached manner. The glazing on the illustrated version is simple and dramatic; bright red from the “waist” up, while the rest of the slender corpus is black. Combined, these features evoke associations to bird-like creatures. Supposedly, the jug was designed with the intention of being non-dripping. The story has it that factory manager Andreas Ollestad, a renowned ceramist versed in *Jugendstil*, quickly demonstrated that this “functionalistic” aspect of modern design was not to be trusted—because the jug *did* drip.³¹

An even more distinctive product is a liqueur carafe [Figure 8-12]. This bears so many of the hallmarks of Art Deco design that it almost becomes a cliché: The shape is composed by combining basic, geometric forms in an additive way—the corpus is spheric, the handle is curved to “orbit” the corpus, and the spout is circular with a round plug. These components are then emphasized by giving each element different, contrasting colours. The glaze is very lustrous, something which lends a certain luxurious aura to the object.³² This feel is further enhanced through the lush design details of the handle, which has a golden glaze and is connected to the corpus with a zig-zag-shaped element.

A liqueur carafe is no mundane object, no everyday utility article for most people even today—let alone for the majority of the Norwegian population in the 1930's. Viewed against this background, such an exclusive design might be well-suited for this kind of product. Based on the work at Egersund, it is safe to say that the material he employed there, earthenware, was far better suited for Grimsrud's Art Deco-inspired products than pottery was.

30. Stranger, *op.cit.* p 22

31. *Ibid.* p 23

32. This carafe exists also in a matt terracotta version ornamented with little deers. The shape of the object is identical, but its cultural identity is fundamentally altered through the use of a different decor—there is absolutely nothing luxurious or exclusive about this version.

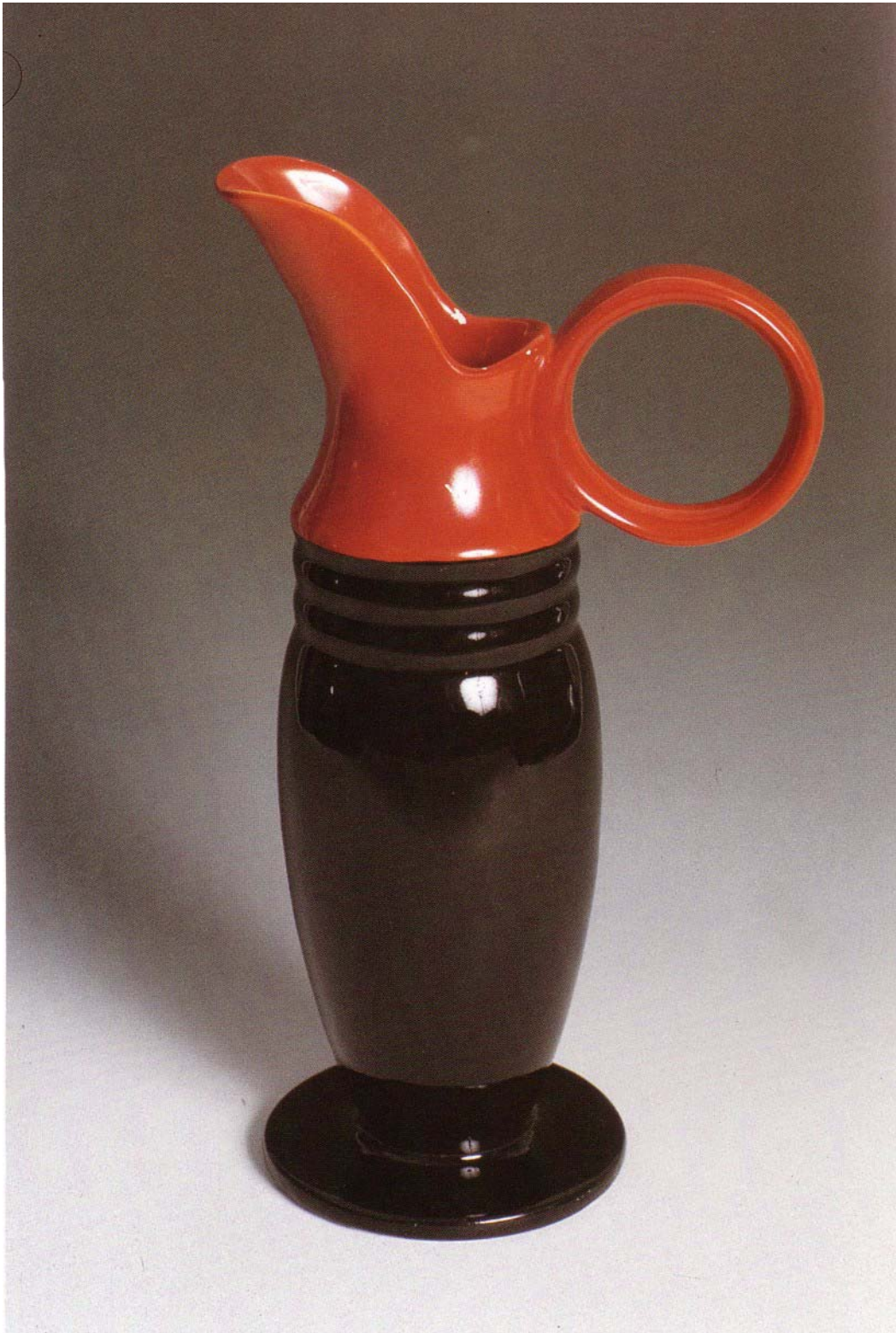


Figure 8–11: Jug (earthenware) Egersund Fayancefabrik, 1933. Design: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photo from I. Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991))



Figure 8–12: Liqueur carafe (earthenware) Egersund Fayancefabrik, 1934. Design: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photo from I. Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991))

Perhaps the most influential and important product Grimsrud designed for Egersund was the service *Åsa*, which has already been mentioned [Figure 8-3]. The simple, integrated and elegant shapes of this service are far less extravagant than the products just discussed [Figure 8-11 and 8-12], and shows a more quiet-mannered and wide-ranging approach to product design. It is this side of Grimsrud that later would prevail during his long engagement at Figgjo. Despite the inclination towards exclusiveness and luxury through his Art Deco designs, he seems to have had ideological motivations as well for joining an industrial company like Egersund. In an interview he expressed this ethic quest as follows:

It feels good to work where it is possible to implement the tendency, which also prevails in Europe, that is to make the beautiful and good objects cheap,.. At such a factory, it is not so much the single, exclusive product which is in force, rather the beautiful utility article which makes it possible for the good object to become everyone's possession. When a factory with extensive mass production really lets the artistic go hand in hand with the practical, then the result will be more beautiful everyday goods [*vakrere hverdagsvare*] and through this the general public taste improves.”³³

Grimsrud here appears as an employee of Egersund Fayancefabrik, and his statements must partly be viewed in light of his apparently conscious role as company ambassador. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that he quotes word perfect the applied art movement's creed, *more beautiful everyday goods* (*vackrare vardagsvara*), coined by the Swedish art historian and ideologist Gregor Paulsson.³⁴ He thus effectively demonstrates his allegiance to the official ideology promoted by the Applied Art Association.

Still, Grimsrud's ode to cheap, mass-produced goods seems oddly contrasted by much of his designs for Egersund. And the suspicion that he had trouble adapting to the role of projecting industrial designer and implementing the ideology he preached is further reinforced by the fact that he resigned his position at Egersund after only one year and returned to Graverens—this time as design manager. This decision was, at least according to *Bonytt*'s Harald Hals, made because Grimsrud “found it personally more gratifying to work with the good, homely blue clay rather than the earthenware's unfamiliar, white and somewhat dead mass.”³⁵ But the experience and expertise he gained at Egersund, both in terms of design management, product development, material technology and production technology would become absolutely essential to his work at Figgjo, commencing more than a decade later.

Back at Graverens, he resumed his task as design manager and continued to develop pottery products in blue clay for the company's craft-based production system. The work executed during his second period at Graverens can best be described as a return to the

33. Münsterhjelm, *op.cit.* (“Det smaker godt å ha sitt arbeide hvor det er mulighet for å virkeliggjøre den tendens, som også hersker ute i Europa, nemlig å lage de vakre og gode ting billige,.. Det gjelder ved en sånn fabrikk mindre det enkelte eksklusive produkt, mere den vakre bruksvare som muliggjør at den gode ting kan bli hver manns eie. Når en fabrikk med omfattende masseproduksjon virkelig lar det kunstneriske gå hånd i hånd med det praktiske, da blir resultatet vakrere hverdagsvare og derigjennom høines smaken hos det store publikum.”)

34. Gregor Paulsson, *Vackrare Vardagsvara* (Stockholm: Svenska Slöjdföreningen, 1919)

35. Harald Hals, “Keramikk i Rogaland” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 130 (“personlig mer tilfredsstillende å arbeide med den gode, hjemlige blåleira fremfor steintøyets fremmede, hvite og litt døde masse.”)

innate materiality of the blue clay. The geometry of the products is more basic than ever, the glazing is much more rustic—sometimes even missing, the colours are kept in earthen tones, and the decor is strictly abstract—mostly limited to discreet lines in white or black.

One of many such products from this period is a round vase [Figure 8-13]. The



Figure 8–13: Vase (pottery) Graverens, 1937. Design: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photo from I. Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991))

peculiar material character of these objects is obtained through a process known as crude baking, where the blue clay is baked at a temperature of approximately 1060 degrees Celsius, which is significantly higher than what is normal for this material. This results in a highly distinctive material tactility characterized by a rugged surface which is often left unglazed and unpolished, preserving the natural reddish brown colour of the baked clay. The vase illustrated here has a very simple, spheric shape which is cut off at the bottom and top to create a base and an opening. The rugged surface is polished off in a ribbon along the base and the opening, and the top one of these is given a white glazing. Apart from this modest effect, the expression of the vase is completely dominated by the crude materiality.

Based on his encounter with these new, crude baked Graverens products, the art historian Knut Greve, secretary of the Applied Art Association, gave this bold, enthusiastic, and admiring description of Grimsrud and his work:

Without doubt, [Grimsrud] is the one who in this country has the best and most correct understanding of ceramics. Among his latest work, the really simple, heavy forms should particularly be emphasized, where the items have retained the baked clay colour, without any painted decor. These are things that indicate the absolute peak of our production today.³⁶

Again, this confirms that Grimsrud was highly respected and his designs very much approved of by the chief ambassadors of the applied art community. This impression is underscored by the fact that two years after Greve's praise, Grimsrud designs were selected for the Norwegian contribution to the 1937 World Exhibition in Paris.³⁷

But it is also possible to interpret what is missing here: the utter silence with regard to Grimsrud's return from industrial production at Egersund to craft-based workshop production at Graverens may be a sign of either a complete indifference toward questions of production technology within the applied art community, or—perhaps more plausible—of a tendency to juxtapose and equal crafts and industry as simply two different but equally valid means to the same end; more beautiful everyday goods.

It should be added here, that pottery production in the interwar years was one of a continuously decreasing number of trades where workshop production actually could compete economically against industrial production due to insufficient mechanization of the manufacturing methods. It is interesting to note that this argument had made pottery one of the model trades of the British Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19. century in its crusade against industrialization and persistent advocacy of craft-based workshop production systems.³⁸ In light of this, it is interesting to note that Grimsrud during his second tenure at Graverens, in 1937, made a study trip to Stoke-on-Trent in North Staffordshire, home of the oldest and most influential clusters of industrial pottery manufacture.³⁹

Ragnar Grimsrud remained at Graverens until the end of 1945. On March 23. 1946, he assumed his new position as general manager and design manager at Figgjo Kraftselskap A/S—Keramikkfabrikk (Figgjo Power Company Ltd.—Ceramics Factory) with the primary task of guiding the transformation of this young, unsettled pottery workshop into a modern earthenware factory.

36. *Vi selv og våre hjem*, August 1935, p 24-25 (“Uten tvil er [Grimsrud] den som her i landet har den beste og riktigste forståelse av keramikk. Blandt hans seneste arbeider bør særlig fremheves de helt enkle, tunge former, hvor gjenstandene har fått beholde den brente lerfarve, uten nogen som helst malt dekor. Det er saker som betegner et absolutt høydepunkt i vår produksjon idag.”)

37. Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982) p 783

38. Elizabeth Cumming, “Studios, Education and Industry” in Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan (eds.), *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991) p 73-74

39. Berg, Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.*

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed forms in formation. The mid- to late 1940s was the phase in which Figgjo underwent a conversion from a tiny, amateurish pottery workshop to a sizable, professional earthenware factory. In addition to a considerable expansion of the production facilities, the workforce and the manufacturing apparatus, the enlargement and professionalisation of the management and design staff was essential in this process. Many of the key figures that would greatly influence the company, its design strategy and its product development for decades to come were hired in this period.

While preparing the transition to earthenware production, this new design expertise also made their mark on the pottery production, which was continued until 1948. This resulted in a clear improvement in the quality of this intermediate output, at least compared with the company's very earliest products. The latter half of this chapter was devoted to a relatively thorough presentation of the man who more than any other single actor would guide not only the formation of the factory, but also the formation of Figgjo's design strategy and practice for nearly three decades; general manager and design manager Ragnar Grimsrud.

This chapter concludes our sojourn in the 1940s, a phase I have dubbed *constructing design discourse*. In different manners and initially virtually independent of each other, both *Bonytt* and Figgjo contributed to this construction of a design discourse through *setting the agenda* and *setting the table* respectively.

Conclusion: Constructing Design Discourse

In these chapters, we have seen how design ideology was appropriated, interpreted, transformed and mediated through *Bonytt* and the various activities of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen brukskunst). The examination has shown how this process can be understood as a process of domestication taking place in a network of actors who both influenced and were influenced by the ideology. The trajectory of Norwegian modernism was thus heavily affected by the different and differing interests of the various actors involved.

Most actors seemed to agree that the Norwegian design of our time could not be a copy of “the international style”—it had to be developed and given a characteristic of its own, distinguishing it from the design of other cultures and times. But the agreement stopped here. Suggestions or tendencies of how to cultivate a Norwegian modern design varied from national traditionalism (re-interpreting our rich cultural heritage), via traces of historicist infatuations (the widespread affection for “peasant rococo” (“*bonderokokko*”)), to more subtle and serene proposals based on contemporary design ideals.

This diversity is fascinating, and it illustrates the feeling of dissatisfaction with the international avant-garde modernism of the interwar years as it was understood by the Norwegian design community. For instance, the applied art movement frequently dissociated themselves from the archetypal examples of avant-garde modernist design; the tubular steel furniture was ridiculed as “bicycle chairs” and “machine furniture”, and dismissed as unfit for domestic use and thus regarded an erroneous experiment.¹

The notion of public education was prevalent, and might be said to represent one of the most persistent legacies of the earlier applied art movement (*brukskunstbevegelsen*) and the Applied Art Association’s (Foreningen Brukskunst) interwar program and activities. *Bonytt* had an explicit, self-pronounced mission to teach the public good taste and how to set up house correctly. This was reflected in a large number of articles explaining how and why simple, rational, moderate products are superior to non-modern designs, and many articles demonstrating how to decorate your home in order to make the most of your humble domicile.

We also find numerous articles educating the general public in a vast array of visual/material cultures of the past, such as ancient Egypt and Greece, the renaissance, baroque, empire, but also national traditions such as Norse art, national folk art, farm house and cabin architecture and interiors, etc. These were part of a very deliberate strategy. Like Arne Remlov put it: “He who knows the good arts and crafts of previous times, can better assess the products of his own time”.² But this activity often turned into an evident legitimatizing use of history, where contemporary ideas are projected onto historical events in order to function as justification of the author’s own views. One example of

1. Eivind Engelstad, “Norske møbler i de siste 50 år” in *Bonytt* Vol. 8, 1948, p 119 (“‘sykkelstolene’... maskinmøbler”)

2. Arne Remlov, “Kommentar til årgangen 1949” in *Bonytt* Vol. 9, 1949, p 216 (“Den som kjenner tidligere tiders gode kunsthåndverk, kan lettere vurdere sin egen tids frembringelser.”)

this may be an article by art historian Ada Buch on the British Queen Anne-style which was equipped with the not very subtle subtitle “Functionalism 200 years ago” (“*Funksjonalisme for 200 år siden*”).³

The war brought about severe shortages of consumer goods and materials, as well as a widespread requisition of production facilities. This extraordinary situation made its mark on *Bonytt* not only through the articles; the advertisements are as interesting a testimony to the scarcities, restrictions and rationings. The irony of advertising at all under these conditions is evident in an advertisement placed by the furniture retailer Martin Olsen & Søn A/S in 1941 with the heading “Customers unwanted!” and a copy lamenting their inability to offer much furniture but promising the best possible service and imaginative solutions.⁴ The silversmith company David-Andersen demonstrated creative entrepreneurship when announcing that “Due to shortage of silver we can no longer supply silverware in the ordinary way. But if You have defect or uninteresting silverware, we can rework these.”⁵ Of course, these problems did not disappear over night at the end of the war—as late as October 1948 the copy from an advertisement by Høyang—Nordisk Aluminiumindustri A/S read:

Unfortunately, aluminium kitchen utensils from HØYANG are still mostly in short supply... We understand the situation and can assure you that we are working to capacity to accommodate the housewives.⁶

Certainly, these advertisements seem rather curious today. Their objective, however, is evident: to uphold the familiarity with and reputation of the companies and their products pending better days.

War-time occupation in Norway spurred patriotism, nationalism and traditionalism on a large scale. This tendency was not dominant, but still very much present also in the columns of *Bonytt*. Once in a while it assumed grandiloquent, romanticizing forms like Knut Greve’s ranting about our national tradition and the national spirit as the only true prerequisite for a Norwegian applied art, referring to viking ships and stave churches, and citing the Norse poem *Håvamål*.⁷

A more temperate expression of the same patriotism is found in Arne Remlov’s proud, but somewhat astonished assertion that the domestic applied art has prospered and flourished under siege, *despite* the disadvantageous circumstances caused by the war and the occupation. He was especially eager to point out that, according to him, “the Norwegian expression shows more than before”. According to the editor, this tendency was a result of the spirit and skills of the designers: “The recent designs of the younger

3. Ada Buch, “‘Queen Anne’—Funksjonalisme for 200 år siden” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 2, 1942, p 135-137

4. *Bonytt*, No. 9, 1941, p 27 (“Kunder frabes!”)

5. *Bonytt*, No. 10, 1941, p 2 (“På grunn av sølvangel kan vi ikke lengere [sic] levere Dem sølv på vanlig måte. Men hvis De selv har defekte eller interesseløse sølvsaker omarbeider vi disse.”)

6. *Bonytt*, No. 10, 1948, p xv (“Dessverre, aluminiumkjøkkentøy fra HØYANG er nok ennå i stor utstrekning mangelvare... Vi på vår side forstår situasjonen og kan forsikre at vi arbeider på sprenget for å imøtekomme husmødrene.”)

7. Knut Greve, “Hjemme er hver mann herre” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 164-169

architects and interior people are Norwegian, have a national distinctive stamp, not an assumed one, but a natural one.”⁸

It is not quite clear exactly which features Remlov believed to render these products particularly national in character, but he clearly assigned the credit for the tendency almost exclusively to the designers. Thus, the manufacturers and the public were still largely seen as opponents who only reluctantly by way of effective and persistent propaganda could be overcome.

The latter half of the 1940s was in the columns of *Bonytt*, like in virtually any other aspect of society, dominated by the reconstruction.⁹ Editor Remlov and his companions quickly interconnected their quest for better and more beautiful products with job number one—the vast housing development required to meet the shortages created by the war—and the social vocation associated with the latter. This allowed them to enrol new, very powerful actors, like various bodies of the rapidly expanding public administration in their network.

The propaganda was directed towards two main targets; the ignorant public who did not understand that modern design would revolutionize their quality of life, and the unwilling manufacturers who did not understand that modern design was both their moral responsibility and financially advantageous. Keeping in tone with the social responsibility of the reconstruction, the rhetoric employed by *Bonytt* was centered around notions like economy, rationality, simplicity, appropriateness, and maximum space utilization.

The debate on “decor in our time” revealed that the majority of the applied art community agreed that decor was a desirable feature of design, but disagreed fiercely on what modern decor should be. This difference of opinion notwithstanding, the debate showed how the modern design ideals in Norway had moved away from the severe continental avant-garde modernist ideals of the interwar years.

Another important topic was the promises and dangers of industrial production systems. The Norwegian applied art community had ever since the founding of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen brukskunst), despite rhetorical infatuation with industrial mass-production, been firmly rooted in the tradition of the artisan-craftsman and the studio/workshop production. The expected and partially experienced increased dominance of industrial mass-production during and after World War II was thus met with highly ambivalent feelings. Its consequences both on culture, society, economy and product quality were feared, but at the same time, its possible virtues and democratizing potential fascinated.

The end of the war also resulted in better possibilities for travelling and reporting news, ideas, trends and events from the rest of the world. *Bonytt* brought the latest design

8. Arne Remlov, “Det skjer noe her og” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 3, 1943, p 182-186 (“det norske uttrykk synes mer enn før... Det de yngre arkitektene og interiørfolkene har tegnet i de senere årene er norsk, har et nasjonalt særpreg, ikke et villet, men et selvfølgelig.”)

9. Immediately after the war, the estimated housing shortage was approximately 80-90 000 habitations. For an elaborate discussion on housing ideals in the reconstruction period, see: Jon Guttu, “*Den gode boligen*”—*Fagfolks oppfatning av boligkvalitet gjennom 50 år* [doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitektthøgskolen i Oslo, 2003) p 43-173

news from the neighbouring countries as well as from e.g. Great Britain, Italy, and the USA home to the Norwegian applied art community.

After having examined the mediation and domestication of design ideology during and immediately after World War II, and in many ways witnessed the infancy and first phase of the propaganda vehicle and debate arena *Bonytt*, we then turned to the parallel development of an industrial production company—Figgjo—and analysed how the ideas were domesticated through design into products.

In the last two chapters we have followed the first fumbling steps towards developing an industrial production plant at Figgjo. In order to do so, it was necessary to start out by briefly presenting the precarious social, cultural, political and fiscal situation in which the venture came into being. A quick retrospect of the major physical prerequisite for the establishment of the company, the disused hydroelectric power plant, completed the backdrop required to understand the beginning of this business adventure.

The entrepreneurship of Sigurd Figved and Harald Lima, alongside their all but obvious choice of trade was presented. Their decision to go for pottery production turned out not to be such a rash and random choice after all, having examined the longstanding traditions for ceramic manufacture in the Sandnes area in particular and the Rogaland district in general.

During the first years, a rather provisional and makeshift pottery workshop was established while simultaneously turning the power plant into a suitable production facility for pottery. After a crash course in pottery production technology and manufacturing methods, we examined the results of this production. The earliest production at Figgjo bore clear evidence of the difficult situation under which it was conceived; wartime occupation, crummy facilities, makeshift production methods, and an inexperienced staff.

When external conditions improved, production facilities and methods enhanced, and management, design and production staffs were professionalized considerably during the first postwar years, this development was reflected also in the resulting products. Material quality and design quality increased drastically, and the distribution network expanded to a national level. As a means to pursue this trajectory, the very ambitious and demanding strategical decision to abandon pottery production in favour of earthenware production was made.

To plan and guide this transformation process, the company needed a person who embodied vast experience with ceramic production, design, design management, possessed versatile talents, and also had managerial qualities. The man assigned to the job was Ragnar Grimsrud. In the latter half of the last chapter, we got to know Grimsrud and his professional career and development from his education as a graphic artist, his turn to studio ceramics, his introduction to commercial pottery workshop manufacture at Graverens, and finally his experience with design management and industrial earthenware factory production at Egersund. Before we return to Figgjo and the preparation for and development of its earthenware production, it is now time to pick up where we left the negotiations of design ideology and mediation, and study the further developments throughout the 1950s.

Part IV:

Negotiating Design Networks

Introduction: Negotiating Design Networks

The peculiar, bisected 1940s ended with two major political events in Norway, one international and one domestic: the 1949 NATO membership, and the sweeping victory of the social democrats in the 1949 parliamentary election. The latter event was the beginning of a era of unprecedented political concord and concurrence, resulting in an unbroken chain of absolute majority governments formed by the Labour party (Arbeiderpartiet) lasting until 1961. Thus, the 1950s became a period of extraordinary political manoeuvrability and policy implementation. The decade saw the emergence of the welfare-state, vast expansions of the bureaucracy, and extensive industrial developments. On the organizational level, this intensive modernization of the Norwegian society resonate in the widespread institutionalization of interest groups and the general professionalization. Industry replaced agriculture as the largest sector of employment, gained both financial and political hegemony, and the public Norway came to consider itself an industrialized nation.¹

The reconstruction had gone quicker than anticipated, and the new decade meant a gradual adjustment to “normal” life and more permanent and long-term development.² The frenetic economic growth spurred by the bottled-up demands of the war years had decreased towards the end of the 1940s.³ The 1950s, however, saw a much more deeply rooted, fundamental and long-lasting economic growth based on internal strategies such as governmentally initiated industrial developments, infrastructure construction and expanding public services, but also external factors such as GATT, the Marshall aid, OEEC, and—at the end of the decade—EFTA. Norway was far from a rich country in 1950, but the development during the decade was tremendous and shows that the “economic wonder” did not disregard this little nation at the rim of Europe either.⁴

The government’s financial and industrial policies favoured the development of large-scale heavy industry such as e.g. metal works over the manufactured goods industry. The former was seen as a vital instrument in building national wealth and the

1. Berge Furre, *Norsk historie 1905-1990* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1992) p 237-247

2. Perhaps the strongest symbol of the rapid and massive reconstruction in terms of housing development was the 1951 completion of Norway’s first satellite town Lambertseter on the outskirts of Oslo. Generally, the satellite towns of the 1950s and 1960s became highly characteristic of the social democratic era in the Scandinavian countries: Francis Sejersted, *Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder—Norge og Sverige i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Pax, 2005) p 258-259. For a fascinating account of what these new satellite town environments was like to grow up in for the first generation, see the novel: Tove Nilsen, *Skyskraperengler* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1982). A curious anecdote is that several of the buildings in the satellite town Bøler playing important roles in Nilsen’s novel, such as the tower blocks where her own family lived, the surrounding apartment buildings, the artists’ residences, and the house of the speed skater and national icon Knut Johannesen, were all presented in *Bonytt* in almost panegyric ways: Håkon Mjelva, “Høyhusene på Bøler i Oslo” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 86-88, Liv Schjødt, “Vakre hus er ikke alltis dyre—stygge hus er ikke alltid billige” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 11-14, Harriet Clayhills, “Bo i et atelierhus” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, unpagged and Arne Remlov, “Håndverkers og skøytemesters hus” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 104-106. For further novelist discussions on what was later seen to be glaring discrepancies between social intentions and consequences of Norwegian satellite towns, see: Dag Solstad, *Forsøk på å beskrive det ugjennomtrengelige* (Oslo: Oktober, 1984) and Nikolaj Frobenius, *Teori og praksis* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2004)

3. Furre, *op.cit.* p 237-244

4. Fritz Hodne, *Norges økonomiske historie 1815-1970* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1981) p 582-587

strength of the state, while the latter was regarded as encouraging conspicuous consumption and sardonically nicknamed “the ashtray industry”. In spite of this puritan productivist policy, the consumption growth in Norway was very rapid and large compared to other western European countries.⁵

This increase in living standard and consumption was reflected in the manufacturing of goods as well. Domestic appliances, electric equipment, utensils and other consumer goods were turned out in much larger volumes and at escalating speed. Both their sheer magnitude and the application of new materials and production technologies contributed to the growing impact of industrial products in the lives of ordinary people. But private consumption was far from unproblematic in a society guided by a temperate, even abstemious social democratic ideology and which was also still heavily marked by a puritanic heritage. One of the most significant governmental interventions in the quest to stagger what was by many considered a dangerous and immoral commodity fetishism and incipient conspicuous consumption, was the establishment of the Consumers’ Council (Forbrukerrådet) in 1953. The mission of the Consumers’ Council, then, was to educate the populace in the virtues of temperance and the art of “rational” consumption. The Norwegian historian Francis Sejersted has quite eloquently shown the irony of this dilemma: “They [the social democrats] did not like the affluent society, but they contributed to its realization.”⁶

The historian Paul Betts has in his cultural history of German industrial design argued that “the ‘50s was perhaps the most “thingly” of all epochs.”⁷ Although Betts underpins his assertion by pointing to the German people’s need to replace the political idols of the preceding generation with new idols of the marketplace, his observation seems valid also in a Norwegian context. The 1950s can also be said to represent the golden era of the housewife and in the extension of this, the growing focus upon and importance of the home as an arena for identity, culture and social life.⁸

In architecture, a growing dismay towards the universalist aspirations expressed by the avant-garde modernism of the inter-war years soon arose. The critique was based on aspects the prewar avant-garde was accused of ignoring: humanization, attention to psychological factors, expressive use of materials, contextual and environmental considerations, and concern for local traditions.⁹ This movement is generally known as *critical regionalism*, a term coined by British architect and architectural historian Kenneth Frampton.¹⁰

5. Christine Myrvang, “Fra knapphet til overflod—Jakten på det rasjonelle massekonsumet” in Christine Myrvang, Sissel Myklebust and Brita Brenna, *Temmet eller uhemmet—Historiske perspektiver på konsum, kultur og dannelse* (Oslo: Pax, 2004) p 291-294

6. Sejersted, *op.cit.* p 350 (“De likte ikke overflodssamfunnet, men de bidro til å realisere det.”)

7. Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) p 4

8. Dag Østerberg, *Det moderne—Et essay om verdens kultur 1740-2000* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1999) p 315-317

9. Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture/2* (Milan/New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1986) p 331

10. Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture—A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980) p 314-327. A critical discussion of the criticism raised against modernist architecture during the early postwar years in Great Britain, especially focusing on how strategies for dehumanizing modernism were coined, can be found in: Tim Benton, “The Myth of Function” in Paul Greenhalgh (ed.), *Modernism in Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990) p 40-52

Regionalism is probably not a particularly adequate term to describe the corresponding development in the realm of applied art and industrial design, partly because an object is less directly contingent on the location of its manifestation than a building. But similarities and analogies do most certainly exist. As we have already seen, the radical ideas of the inter-war avant-garde modernists were by no means accepted unconditionally in postwar Norway. George H. Marcus' claim that the fifties was the decade "when everyone went modern" is somewhat of an overstatement, but the demonstration of how the concept and idea of "modern design" during this decade became extremely versatile and adaptive to the point of absurdity is striking.¹¹

Anyhow, it is safe to say that modern design in this period assumed a great variety of shades and colours. Accordingly, the guiding principles and ideology on which this vast array of modern design expressions were built, were also formed and transformed, interpreted and reinterpreted in all the different social and cultural contexts it appeared in—including, of course, that of 1950s Norway.

The professionalization and institutionalization of the Norwegian design community, which we saw some early examples of in the latter part of the 1940s, gained real momentum throughout the 1950s. Important events were the founding of organizations like the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in 1955 and the Applied Art Centre PLUS (Brukskunst-senteret PLUS) in 1958, the Lunning Prize in 1951 and the Jacob Prize in 1957. Also, the National Association/Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen/-forbundet norsk brukskunst) took its extensive exhibition activities abroad; *Norwegian Applied Art (Norsk Brukskunst)* was shown in Copenhagen and Gothenburg in 1951, Norway was represented at the X, XI and XII *Triennale di Milano* (1954, 1957 and 1960) and at the *H-55* exhibition in Hälsingborg in 1955, and contributed to the joint Nordic exhibition *Design in Scandinavia* which toured North America 1954 through 1957, as well as to the *Formes Scandinaves* shown in Paris in 1958.

This suggests the development of a much more mature, offensive and confident professional community. But as the design community grew both in extension and momentum, it got increasingly difficult for the chieftains to keep the tight formation and control the discourse as more and more actors were enrolled and sub-groups representing different interests were formed. In this situation, *Bonytt* became an arena for negotiating design networks by putting *translations on the agenda*.

In Section A below I will analyse how this production of ideology took place through a process of domestication and negotiation where the rather ambiguous and indeterminate ideology was interpreted, developed and mediated in the Norwegian applied art and design community throughout this dynamic and fascinating decade.

"Until the mid-1950s... it had been difficult to design furniture for the factories, because there was such a demand for furniture that they sold everything they managed to produce, virtually irrespective of what it looked like."¹² This is how the furniture

11. George H. Marcus, *Design in the Fifties—When Everyone Went Modern* (Munich/New York: Prestel, 1998)

12. Ingmar Relling interviewed by Eldar Høidal 15.11.1989 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive] ("til i midten av 50-åra... hadde det vore vanskeleg å teikne møblar for fabrikkane, dette fordi det etter krigen var stor etterspørsel etter møblar, og ein fekk selt det ein produserte, nesten samme korleis møblane såg ut.")

designer Ingmar Relling describes the situation for his profession in the first postwar years.¹³ It was very much seller's market, something which made it possible to sell just about anything, more or less regardless of the product's technical, utilitarian and aesthetic qualities. The German design historian Gert Selle has dubbed this sort of makeshift design "emergency functionalism", and although the conditions in Germany undoubtedly were more severe, the term seems an apt description of the immediate post-1945 situation in Norway as well.¹⁴ This situation was a prerequisite for the massive wave of new business start-ups in the Norwegian manufactured goods industry immediately after the war, and the highly variable quality of the products certainly contributed to the nickname "ashtray industry" discussed above.

Admittedly, Figgjo did not make furniture, but the company's development from a very amateurish local pottery to a relatively large earthenware factory in the course of a few years must be understood on this background. The bold, ambitious and risky decision to initiate this process was made based on the realization that Figgjo could not survive making ashtrays, vases and makeshift teapots out of a hen house and a disused power plant. As early as 1948, two years after the process had started, the Figgjo board considered the transformation a highly necessary venture, largely due to market developments:

The customers behave more and more critically of products and do not to the same degree as before accept that which the factory at any given time find it opportune to manufacture.¹⁵

So, as we see, the so-called "years of shortage" ("*mangelårene*") after the war did not last as long as one might believe. This does not, however, mean that the manufactured goods industry experienced serious sales difficulties in the late 1940s—the demand and market for domestic utensils would remain considerable throughout the 1950s. But in order to compete in the modern Norway of industrialized manufacture, product qualities and market appeal were seen as the key success factors. In other words; industrial design became a commercial competitive factor.¹⁶ Thus, in Section B of this part we shall return to and pick up the Figgjo story where we left off; by examining how the young company managed the transformation process and coped with the realities of large-scale industrial production and a progressively more differentiated and competitive marketplace. Based on the discussion of design ideology and its mediation in the 1950s, we shall also see how Figgjo took part in *negotiating design networks* and how they dealt with the many *translations on the table*.

13. For more on Relling, see: Fredrik Wildhagen, *Møbeldesigneren Ingmar Relling i perspektiv* (Sykkylven: Sykkylven næringsutvikling A/S, 1991)

14. Gert Selle, *Die Geschichte des Design in Deutschland von 1870 bis heute—Entwicklung der industriellen Produktkultur* (Köln: DuMont, 1978) p 243

15. Board meeting minutes, December 1948, Figgjo archive ("Kundene opptrer mer og mer kritiske overfor varer, og lar deg ikke i samme grad som før by det fabrikkten til enhver tid finner det passende å produsere.")

16. The situation was similar in the furniture industry as well—see e.g.: Trinelise Dysthe, "Tilbake til fremtiden. Form gjennom tid—ord gjennom år" in Eldar Høidal (ed.), *Et liv i form—hedersskrift for Inge Langlo* (Sykkylven: Norsk møbelfaglig senter, 2000) p 30-31

Section A:

Translations on the agenda

9 Expressive form, industrial form: Situating design in culture and commerce

9.1 Introduction

As the 1940s became the 1950s, *Bonytt* was well established as the leading design magazine in Norway. It was compulsory reading for anyone affiliated with the design community, and had managed to create a substantial following among the interested general public as well. Also, the magazine's intertwinement with the applied art community had by now become virtually seamless, as the official mouthpiece of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen norsk brukskunst). Having obtained this position, *Bonytt* was the undisputed arena for professional design debate and mediation. In the following, some of its major discussions will be analysed, paying special attention to their inherent processes of negotiation and translation. What were the major concerns of the design community in this period of widespread modernisation and growth? What should be the role and place of design in a society that looked less and less like the prewar Norway in which the applied art movement was constituted? And more specifically; where did design belong on the culture—commerce continuum?

This chapter starts out by picking up a topic touched upon before; design and postwar reconstruction. The applied art community's infatuation with reconstruction did in fact not last very long. Although many designers certainly remained genuinely interested in and devoted to democratic design throughout their careers, the social vocation expressed so passionately in *Bonytt* during the first postwar years soon cooled down. As soon as the worst material shortages were covered, the more conservative forces within the applied art community seem to have been more interested in returning to their concern with design as cultural expression rather than reconceptualising it as social aid.

The topic of manufacturing systems resurfaces again, this time as a debate on the appropriateness of large-scale industrial manufacture in a small country like Norway and its ramifications for design. One of the more pronounced outlooks on this subject was that modern technology and industry could offer exciting new possibilities for design, but that such activities required vast investments and scale of production, rendering it unsuitable in a Norwegian context. Here, craft-based manufacture and traditional industrial art was seen as the more responsible alternative.

But as the prospects of more wide-spread industrial manufacture attuned to Norwegian circumstances and scale became a reality, the design community began taking industry seriously. This also meant a greater attention to industrial design, in that more advanced material technology, more complex products and more mechanised and industrialised production were assumed to require more particular design expertise.

Also, industrial design became something of a boundary zone for negotiations on design's situation in culture and in commerce.

9.2 From social vocation to artistic expression

Low-cost housing projects was still a very hot political topic in 1950. Even though five years of extensive construction had passed since the end of the war, the demand for affordable housing was far from satisfied—especially in and around the greater cities, where massive migration actually made the housing shortage grow rather than decrease.¹ In Oslo, Oslo Housing Association (Oslo Bolig- og Sparelag—OBOS) had assumed the leading role in this vast effort, and had close ties with the rapidly expanding bureaucracy increasingly dominated by social democrats.

Despite the fact that some of the protagonists of the applied art community and *Bonytt*, like e.g. Arne Remlov and Håkon Stenstadvold had conservative political affiliations,² they understood the importance of enrolling the powerful bureaucracy in their actor network. *Bonytt* subeditor Liv Schjødt's 1950 polemic pamphlet *Boligsak er hovedsak* (*Housing issue is main issue*) is an obvious example of this strategy.³

Another attempt at such enrolment was the 1950 exhibition *12 correct* (*12 riktige*) organized by the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) and materialized as 12 “correctly” furnished and decorated apartments in a new OBOS apartment building at Nordre Åsen in Oslo.⁴ Yet another one, which was perhaps more in line with Remlov's political affiliation, was the collaboration with the private contracting firm Selvaag in 1952.⁵ Although the rhetoric surrounding the *12 correct* exhibition was just as moralist and didactic as usual—cf. the title—an exhibition in an OBOS apartment building produced a quite different image than exhibitions in art museums, galleries and showrooms, and might therefore attract a wider and different public.⁶ In line with the perceived attitudes of the expected public, Knut Greve wrote in the exhibition catalogue:

Taste is discussable and we will not do that here. But the efficient and the correct, we can measure and assess... [I]t is not a matter of taste, of beautiful or ugly. It is a matter of common sense.⁷

1. Jon Guttu, “*Den gode boligen*”—*Fagfolks oppfatning av boligkvalitet gjennom 50 år* [doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitektthøgskolen i Oslo, 2003) p 177-178
2. Kjetil Rolness, *Med smak skal hjemmet bygges—innredning av det moderne norge* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995) p 113
3. Liv Schjødt (ed.), *Boligsak er hovedsak* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1950). Originally published by the Norwegian Housewife Association in 1949 as an educational guide based on a series of lectures organized by the Norwegian Tenants' Union's Information Bureau for Interior Decoration and Furnishing (Norsk Leieboersambands opplysningskontor for hjeminnredning og møblering).
4. Hanne Helliesen Moen, “Boligutstillingen “12 riktige”—En forbrukers syn på den” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 101-110 For more on this exhibition, see the exhibition catalogue Arne Remlov (ed.), *Utstillingen “12 riktige” på Nordre Åsen, Grefsen, Oslo, 20. mai—4. juni 1950—12 møblerte leiligheter* (Oslo: LNB/OBOS, 1950) and Solveig Paule, *Boligsak er hovedsak—Boligidealer i etterkrigstiden eksemplifisert med utstillingen “12 riktige”* [Master thesis] (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, 2002)
5. Arne Remlov, “Brukskunstnere innreder Selvaaghus” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 85-95

Just like the self-imposed exile from the artistic sphere, the abandonment of aesthetically based arguments in favour of a rhetoric based on the apothegm of the day—scientific objectivity (“the efficient and the correct, we can measure and assess”) and the quotidian rationale (“common sense”) can be seen as attempts at appealing to a much wider demographic. It should, however, be mentioned here that *12 riktige* was, at least to a certain degree, based on and a reply to the results of the large-scale housing survey organized by the Oslo City Welfare Society (Oslo Byes Vel) during the war and presented in a series of publications from 1948 onwards.⁸ Thus, the dogmatic impression the title gives off is toned down considerably seeing how the exhibition may be interpreted as an attempt at incorporating the needs and desires of actual users/residents in the presentation of the *12 correct*.⁹

Perhaps the most active and persistent missionary of the period was the architect, educator and writer Odd Brochmann. He was a professor of architectural design at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH) from 1949 to 1956, something which gave him an authoritarian voice that he exploited in full. From the 1930s and half a century onwards, he wrote a vast amount of articles, pamphlets and books on cultural history, architecture, interior design, aesthetics and taste—in addition to a large number of children’s books.¹⁰ His work from the 1950s include titles such as *Livsform og boligform*¹¹ (*Lifestyle and housing types*), *Om hus og land og menig mann*¹² (*On house and land and the common man*), in addition to his most famous book *En bok om stygt og pent*¹³ (*A book about the beautiful and the ugly*). This latter one has had a wide dissemination and influence. It has been reissued and reprinted numerous times, most recently in 1994.¹⁴ It was translated into Danish¹⁵ and Swedish¹⁶ in 1954, English in 1955,¹⁷ and German in 1956.¹⁸

-
6. The buildings were designed by the architectural firm Frode Rinnan, Olav Tveten and Kjell Colbiørnsen. Rinnan was, in 1933, co-founder of the Socialist Architects’ Association (Socialistiske arkitekters forening—SAF) and showed a life-long commitment to social housing projects and architecture for “the masses”. When SAF was founded, Odd Brochmann was studying architecture at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH) in Trondheim, and wholeheartedly joined the ideological initiative taken by Frode Rinnan *et al.* Brochmann and Rinnan remained close personal friends, and it was thus befitting that an exhibition based on the housing survey where Brochmann was a prime mover should be mounted in a building designed by Rinnan’s architectural firm: Odd Brochmann, *Rent Bord—En historie om funksjonalismen og funksjonalistene i Norge* (Oslo: Arkitektnytt, 1987) p 41-47 and Anne Lise Aas interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 17.09.1996 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]
 7. Knut Greve, “Vår tids møbler” in Remlov (ed.), *op.cit.* p 2-3 (“Smak og behag kan diskuteres og det vil vi ikke gjøre her. Men det effektive og riktige kan vi måle og bedømme... [D]et ikke er et spørsmål om smak og behag, om pent eller stygt. Det er et spørsmål om sunn fornuft.”)
 8. One of these publications was Odd Brochmann (ed.), *Mennesker og boliger : familieundersøkelsens resultater—Oslo byes vel’s boligundersøkelse* (Oslo: Tanum, 1948)
 9. For more on the relation between the housing survey and the “12 riktige” exhibition, see Paule, *op.cit.* p 57-72
 10. For his bibliography, see Odd Brochmann, *Odd Brochmann: litteratur 1929-1989* (Oslo: Arkitektakademiets bibliotek, 1989)
 11. Odd Brochmann, *Livsform og boligform* (Oslo: Oslo byes vel / Tanum, 1952)
 12. Odd Brochmann, *Om hus og land og menig mann* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1956)
 13. Odd Brochmann, *En bok om stygt og pent: som handler om tingenes form, vesen og innhold, og om det inntrykk de gjør på oss* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1953)
 14. Odd Brochmann, *En bok om stygt og pent: som handler om tingenes form, vesen og innhold, og om det inntrykk de gjør på oss—4. utg.* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1994)

What is particularly interesting about Brochmann and his writings is that he willingly and openly acknowledged, as opposed to many of his colleagues, that modern design was just as much a matter of taste and aesthetic preferences as it was about logic and rationality—not only about sense, but sensibility as well. This did not, however, mean that Brochmann was any more inclined to accept or respect the despised public taste than his fellow missionaries—it was simply a matter of strategy. As he wrote in *Bonytt* in 1950, commenting on a new propaganda movie:

[T]he purely rationally accented argumentation... make up only part of the problems... People are notoriously of the opinion that taste is an undebatable issue, while they are willing to give in to arguments that appeal to images of easier house keeping and healthier lives.¹⁹

Hence, all the modernist rhetoric on hygiene, rationality, economy and utility was, at least to Brochmann, chiefly a front, a means of persuasion in the real mission—winning people over to the “good taste” of the modernist aesthetic.

Still, it would be much too harsh an accusation to dismiss the frequently and explicitly expressed social vocation of *Bonytt* and the applied art community in general as sham and opportunistic mockery. For instance, Arne Remlov indicted the Nestor of Norwegian furniture design and long standing *Bonytt* favourite Alf Sture of heresy in a review of the 1950 annual autumnal exhibition of the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo). The association had entrusted the entire organization of the 1950 edition to the furniture company Hiorth & Østlyngen. As chief designer of the company, Sture’s designs naturally dominated the exhibition, which was entitled *Space and Rhythm (Rom og rytme)*.²⁰ But while Sture’s designs earlier at least had been *intended* for economic serial production (but still safely within the craft-based manufacturing tradition), and thus praised by *Bonytt*, the interiors shown at *Space and Rhythm* bore names like “lounge for an eccentric gentleman”, “lunch room for shipping company executives”, “dining room in a diplomat’s apartment”, etc. Remlov saw “a conspicuous danger in [Sture’s] endeavours to satisfy the new clients”, and described

15. Odd Brochmann, *Om grimt og smukt : som handler om tingenes form, væsen og indhold, og det indtryk de gjør på os* (Copenhagen, 1954)

16. Odd Brochmann, *En bok om vackert och fult som handlar om föremålens form, väsen och innehåll och om det intryck de gör på oss* (Uppsala: Gebers, 1954)

17. Odd Brochmann, *Good and bad taste* [translated from the Norwegian by M. A. Michael] (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955)

18. Odd Brochmann, *Ein Buch über Hässliches und Schönes—das von den Formen der Dinge handelt, ihrem Wesen und Inhalt, und dem Eindruck, den sie auf uns machen* [aus dem Norwegischen übertragen von Thabitha von Bonin] (Berlin : Rembrandt, 1956)

19. Odd Brochmann, “Propagandafilm om hjeminnredning” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 131 (“[D]e rent fornuftbetonte resonnementer... bare utgjør en viss del av problemene... Folk har nå engang den innstilling at smak og behag ikke er diskuterbare saker, mens de er villige til å bøye seg for argumenter som appellerer til forestillinger om lettere husførsel og sunnere liv.”)

20. For more on Sture and his designs for Hiorth & Østlyngen, see: Elen Omtvedt, *Interiørarkitekt Alf Sture—En ener i norsk designhistorie* (Oslo: Designscandinavia, 2001). Sture was hired by Hiorth & Østlyngen straight out of SHKS in 1940, after Hiorth & Østlyngen’s managing partner Arne Hiort had asked SHKS teacher Arne Korsmo for promising designers and been pointed in the direction of Sture: Alf Sture interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 19.09.1997 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]

much of the exhibited furniture as excessively traditional in form and luxurious in execution. The *Bonytt* editor showed no mercy: “The radical designer Alf Sture displays reactionary tendencies.”²¹ The irony is that 16 years later, Remlov hailed Sture as Norway’s greatest furniture designer exactly because he was so deeply rooted in traditional craft and aesthetics.²² Avant-garde becomes rear-garde, action becomes reaction.

After *Bonytt* got status as official mouthpiece for the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst), the editor was automatically board member of the National Association. The 1950 national congress elected the goldsmith Torolf Prytz president (1950-1956) after Knut Greve’s resignation, with co-editor Bernt Heiberg (who would succeed Prytz as president) as board member and co-editor Jens von der Lippe as deputy board member. For our purpose, it is also interesting to note that Figgjo’s general manager and design manager Ragnar Grimsrud was elected associate member of the Council for Applied Art (Rådet for brukskunst)—an advisory body intended to ensure the interests of the practising designers.²³

The national congress was held in connection with the third Nordic congress for applied art and crafts in Stockholm. One of the topics which was discussed at the Nordic congress was the education of industrial designers. A committee was formed, consisting of among others Arne Korsmo and Alvar Aalto, who were to develop a strategy for how the national associations and the existing schools of applied art should position themselves in relation to the challenges posed by the increasing industrialization and the emerging profession of industrial designer.²⁴ As time went by, the committee more or less disintegrated, but Korsmo presented *his* views on the matter before the next Nordic congress in 1954. He envisioned a school of architecture and design organized at the University of Oslo, as he was dissatisfied with the reform strategy of the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS).²⁵ His vision remained a pipe dream, and when he two years later was appointed professor of architectural design at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole) in Trondheim (succeeding Brochmann), his engagement with design affairs

21. Arne Remlov, “Utstillingen Rom og rytme” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 173-177 (“en iøyenfallende fare i hans bestrebelse på å tilfredsstille de nye klientene... Den radikale formgiver Alf Sture viser reaksjonære tilbøyeligheter.”)

22. Arne Remlov, “Bonytt-intervju om fantasi og frihet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1966, p 129-133

23. N.N., “Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst har hatt sitt landsmøte” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 192. The council made up an intricate actor network of the ideologists and theoretician of the applied art community, leading bureaucrats of the sector, industrialists, managers, and practising designers. Other council members were e.g. director of the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) Thor Kielland, director of the National Museum of Decorative Arts in Trondheim (Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum), Thorvald Krohn-Hansen, director of the West-Norway Museum of Decorative Arts in Bergen (Vestlandske kunstindustrimuseum) Robert Kloster, the conservative MP Rolf Stranger, ceramist Eva Børresen, cabinet maker Wilhelm Knudsen, architect and city planning officer Harald Hals, architect and Oslo housing officer Jacob Christie Kielland, factory owner Aksel Sellgren, general manager of Sønnico Nils Sønnichsen, and art historian Knut Greve.

24. Jacob Prytz, “Kongress i Stockholm—Seksjon for undervisning” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 192

25. Arne Korsmo, “En ny skole for arkitektur og formgivning. Idéforslag til et institutt tilknyttet Universitetet” in *Arkitektnytt* Vol. 3, 1954, p 100-105

ebbed away. The debate on the education of designers would become more and more pressing as the decade elapsed, but any great changes would be long in waiting.

Design for industrial production was what concerned and enthused Jens von der Lippe too in his report from the 1950 exhibition *What We Can (Hvad vi kan)* organized by the Applied Art Association in Oslo. He was greatly impressed by the exhibited work by a group of young designers who all worked for larger, industrialized manufacturing companies: Hermann Bongard and Willy Johansson at Hadeland Glassverk, Arne Lindaas at Norsk Glassverk, Magnor, and Konrad Galaaen and Tias Eckhoff at Porsgrunn Porselensfabrikk.²⁶ Von der Lippe prophesied that these new names would bring important and novel attitudes and results to Norwegian applied art and design, and in many respects his prediction was right on the mark, because these designers would strongly influence the Norwegian design scene—at least the applied art section of it—for decades to come.

The craftsman, writer and teacher von der Lippe was thrilled and excited that commercially oriented industrial undertakings had seen the light: “Hail any company management who endeavours to meet their designers with understanding and give them air under their wings.”²⁷ Thus, it is still the free, artistic creativity which is seen as the key to good design. It should perhaps be mentioned here, that three of these five “rising stars”—Lindaas, Galaaen and Eckhoff—had all recently graduated from the ceramics class at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) where Jens von der Lippe taught.²⁸

The exhibited work was partly serial products about to be launched, partly exclusive studio craft, and some prototypes intended for industrial production. And it was precisely this freedom to engage in “non-commercial” craft-based experiments that von der Lippe saw as the main reason for the quality of also the serial products. His own domain, handicraft, was not any more to be considered *synonymous* with artistic, technical and utilitarian quality, but the material knowledge and *Fingerspitzengefühl* tied to craft-based manufacturing would still be an essential prerequisite also for the emerging field of industrial design.²⁹

A similar attitude was expressed in connection with the exhibition *Norwegian Applied Art 1951 (Norsk Brukskunst 1951)* which was shown in Copenhagen and Gothenburg. In the exhibition catalogue, Ministry of Foreign Affairs officer Odd Hølaas wrote:

It is a deplorable fact that the applied art in Norway has been inhibited, first by the war, and later by shortages of materials and the economic scantiness which has characterized our politics since the war. This has allowed little opportunity for the designers to prosper. The larger companies have had difficulties meeting the frantic basic needs, and they have

26. Among the exhibited objects were selected prototypes from the forthcoming china service *Det riflede*, designed by Tias Eckhoff and produced by Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik from 1952.

27. Jens von der Lippe, “Nye navn i kunstindustrien” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 216 (“Ære være enhver bedriftsledelse som bestreber seg på å møte sine brukskunstnere med forståelse og gi dem luft under vingene.”)

28. Alf Bøe, *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år* (Porsgrund/Oslo: Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik/Tanum, 1967) p 222

29. Jens von der Lippe, “Nye navn i kunstindustrien” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 212-216

given their designers and artists little opportunity for research, experiments—for the inspired play with form, colour and material which are prerequisite for new progress in the production.³⁰

Hølaas obviously interpreted the term applied art quite literally; as artistic values *applied* to a product when all its other properties have been catered to. Design is thus seen as a surplus phenomenon—as an activity which can only be prioritized in times of a certain level of prosperity. He also emphasizes the artistic element—“the inspired play”—as the essential property of the design process. This suggests that the view of design as a primarily artistic/aesthetic phenomenon was widespread, although perhaps more so among lay people and the general public than within the professional community.

As mentioned above, the sociologist Kjetil Rolness has suggested that the shortages and scantiness were in fact welcomed by the design professionals as sort of an unexpected helping hand. He claims that to them,

scarcity was not a deplorable fact in a time of crisis, but a design ideal valid at all times... Here they [design professionals] had for years sought to limit all superfluous decor and finery, and then the problem “solved” itself through shortages of materials and economic stagnation.³¹

The absurdity and strained character of Rolness’ assertion is effectively demonstrated by the above quote from the *Norwegian Applied Art 1951 (Norsk Brukskunst 1951)* exhibition catalogue. Artistic freedom, creative spirit and material/formal experiment were commonly viewed as fundamental prerequisites of good design, and the conditions in Norway during and immediately after the war were thus considered severely restrictive of—certainly not beneficial to—the development of good design.³²

9.3 Responsible craft vs. experimental industry

The subject of industrialized mass-production remained a hot topic in the applied art community throughout the 1950s. As we have seen, the debate had surfaced in the

30. Odd Hølaas, “Norsk brukskunst—En introduksjon” in Arne Remlov, et al. (eds.), *Norsk brukskunst 1951—utstilling i Röhsska konstslöjdmuseet, Göteborg; Det Danske Kunstindustrimuseum, København*. (Oslo: LNB, 1951) (unpaged) (“Det er en beklagelig kjennsgjøring at brukskunsten i Norge har vært hemmet, først av krigen, og senere av materialmangel og den økonomiske nødtørftighet som har preget vår politikk etter krigen. Dette har gitt brukskunstnerne liten anledning til å utfolde seg. De større bedrifter har hatt vanskelig nok for å imøtekomme de skrikende primære behov, og de har budt sine tegnere og kunstnere liten anledning til forsøk, eksperimenter—til den åndfulle lek med form, farver og materiale som er forutsetningen for nye landvinninger i produksjonen.”)

31. Rolness, *op.cit.* p 104 (“var knapphet ikke et beklagelig fakum i en krisetid, men et formgivningsideal som gjaldt til enhver tid... Her hadde de i alle år forsøkt å begrense all overflødig pynt og stas, og så “løste” problemet seg selv gjennom materialmangel og økonomisk stagnasjon.”)

32. This goes to show that also most critics of modernism—here exemplified by Rolness—operate with a much too narrow and limited understanding of what modernist design ideology conveys. Since this is an accusation critics of modernism often make in their attacks on positivist historians of modernism, this point becomes particularly pregnant.

columns of *Bonytt* already in the latter part of the 1940s, and conveyed deep concerns about product qualities and cultural matters as well as genuine fascination for its potential social/democratic ramifications and new opportunities for design. Many of the older actors who were raised and trained in the craft-based production tradition continued to argue against industrialized mass-production, based on various reasonings.

One of the more curious ones was presented by the Danish architect and furniture designer Finn Juhl in 1950. He argued that since mass-production required vast financial investments, it was not competitive. Production equipment and facilities cost a lot of money, and one is thus “forced to produce a very large number of copies.” In order to rid oneself of all these products, one is “forced to... make use of wholesalers and an insanely expensive advertising.”³³ These and other traits of an industrial factory requires a much larger administrative staff. According to Juhl, the result is that the mass-produced goods end up costing as much as products manufactured in smaller series by means of craft-based production systems.

The argument is exemplified by the sizable price tag of the 1948 *Womb Chair* (Model No. 70) designed by Eero Saarinen for Knoll (USD 210).³⁴ He even discredits its innovative use of moulded plastic shell on the ground of dishonest materiality—the plastic shell was “hidden” by the foam-rubber upholstery and the cover.³⁵ But despite its “industrial” appearance, the *Womb Chair* was not a generic mass-produced product, but a high-end luxury commodity—something of which the price tag bears witness. Nevertheless, it is clear that to Juhl, mass-production is almost synonymous with the USA and American industrial design, because he also ridicules the streamlining of non-fast-running objects and the highly commercial fashion aspect of the car industry’s concept of the year-model.³⁶

A contribution of kindred spirit, but less condemning and denunciative came from art historian and president of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst) Knut Greve in a 1950 article entitled “Experiment or Tradition” (“Ekperiment eller tradisjon”). He too appreciated the great investments required in advanced industrial mass-production, but he did not dismiss the system as such—his concern was one of scale; that the mere size of the public, markets and industry in the Nordic countries did not allow for the American kind of industrial mass-production:

The most interesting and intriguing experiments in the field of applied art today are related to completely new materials. These materials are all created by large-scale industry, the

33. Finn Juhl, “Den “riktige” form” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 5 (“tvunget til at producere et meget stort antal eksemplarer... tvunget til... at benytte sig af mellemhandlere og en sindsvagt kostbar reklame.”)

34. By comparison, famous *The Chair* designed by Hans J. Wegner for cabinet maker Johannes Hansen was considered extremely expensive when it was introduced to the American market in 1950 by the New York department store George Jensen, Inc. for USD 125: Astrid Skjerven, *Goodwill for Scandinavian Design—Lunningprisen 1951-70* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2001) p 87, note 251

35. It may seem strange that Juhl did not acknowledge that the *Womb Chair*’s sprayed-on foam-rubber upholstery was as innovative as the moulded plastic shell.

36. Finn Juhl, “Den “riktige” form” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 4-7. For a case study of the hub of American styling, see: David Gartman, “Harley Earl and the Art and Color Section: The Birth of Styling at General Motors” in Dennis P. Doordan (ed.), *Design History—An Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995) p 122-144

really large-scale industry, like we do not know here. All experiments with these materials require that the facilities of the large-scale industry are at one's disposal. They are to be formed under pressure or heat. They are to be moulded in casting moulds that each cost a fortune. But when the moulds are in place, the production becomes cheap. Such experiments can only be carried out in the laboratories of the large-scale industry and backed by the large-scale industry's mighty economic resources... Hand a Norwegian designer a lump of plastic, a glass fibre mat, a rubber sponge. He will make better use of a stone. But it is these experiments that primarily are "modern art" today. It is these who will revolutionize our way of living and our design.³⁷

This text was written as a reflection upon the reactions following the head of the design department at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA), Edgar Kaufmann Jr.'s recent visit to the Nordic countries. He had been invited by the applied art associations to visit Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland in order to assess the countries' production in the field of applied art and—hopefully—bring with him both favourable impressions and plenty of objects back to MoMA. The initiative was based on the associations' firm belief that the Nordic countries were world leaders in this field, and that an exhibition of Nordic design at MoMA would open the doors to the vast and highly lucrative American market.

So, Kaufmann's lack of enthusiasm and disregard of the Nordic applied art spurred deeply emotional reactions in the Nordic applied art communities, varying from anger to disbelief and disillusionment. Greve chose a more nuanced and somewhat opportunistic interpretation. He argued that Kaufmann and MoMA were always looking for exceptional and experimental work, and—given Greve's notion of contemporary experimental design cited above—this was doomed to fail here; not due to lack of talent or skills, but due to structural conditions. We do not have the means to compete in the experimental avant-garde, Greve claimed, but:

It is still no doubt that the Scandinavian countries are leading when it comes to rendering good applied art popular. We have reached the general public. Our exhibitions are visited by people who in any other country in the world would not set foot in an applied art exhibition... [G]ood applied art is manufactured by more companies, sold in more stores and purchased by a larger percentage of the population than any in other place in the world.³⁸

37. Knut Greve, "Eksperiment eller tradisjon" in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 17 ("De mest interessante og fengslende eksperimenter på brukskunstens område er i dag knyttet til helt nye materialer. Disse materialene er samtlige skapt av storindustrien, den virkelige storindustri, slik vi ikke kjenner her hjemme. Alle eksperimenter med disse materialer forutsetter at man rår over storindustriens hjelpemidler. De skal formes under press eller varme. De skal støpes i former som hver for seg koster en formue. Men når formene først er der, blir produksjonen billig. Slike eksperimenter kan bare gjennomføres i storindustriens laboratorier og med storindustriens veldige økonomiske resurser i ryggen... Gi en norsk brukskunstner en klump plastikk, en glassfibermatte, en gummisvamp i hendene. Han vil ha mer nytte av en gråstein. Men det er disse eksperimenter som først og fremst er "modern art" i dag. De er de som vil komme til å revolusjonere våre boligvaner og vår brukskunst.")

38. *Ibid.* p 16 ("Det er fremdeles ingen tvil om at de skandinaviske land er ledende når det gjelder å gjøre god brukskunst populær. Vi har nådd det store publikum. Våre utstillinger blir besøkt av mennesker som ikke i noe annet land i verden ville gå på en utstilling av brukskunst... [G]od brukskunst produseres i flere bedrifter, selges i flere forretninger og kjøpes av en større prosent av befolkningen enn noen andre steder i verden.")

As we see, the defence litigates on social responsibility and democratic values. As Greve illustrated it: “Two rooms plus kitchen is the social framework we wish to focus our efforts on.”³⁹ But running a popular mission had its price, he seems to argue, and this price was the sacrifice of exceptional and experimental design. In order to reach the general public, one had to use forms, colours and compositions that this public is prepared to accept. “It must be connected to a known tradition. Every extreme experiment seem strange and hostile to this public.”⁴⁰ Evidently, Greve did not have much faith in the competence, curiosity and taste of the general public. In this, he follows the long-standing tradition of the applied art community of seeing social responsibility and democratic values as something which had to be installed in the ignorant public by the enlightened and philanthropic elite.

It is fascinating to see how Greve ties the design for/in large-scale industry to the highly elitist, avant-garde culture represented by MoMA, while the Nordic applied art tradition with its close relations to artisans and craft-based production systems is portrayed as democratic and socially responsible. Especially the link between mass-production and avant-garde culture is surprising, because as we have seen, industrial mass-production had more often than not been portrayed as an evil force vulgarizing material culture.

Although Greve claimed that experiments with new materials and production methods had no room in Norwegian industry and applied art, he acknowledged and appreciated their value and necessity in the development of modern design. Because, as he stated: “All culture is reciprocal action between the masses and the elite”.⁴¹ Thus, the elitist experiments were essential to prevent the social programme of Nordic design from becoming “mediocre and petty-bourgeois”.⁴² But he seems to imply that this experimental design should take place elsewhere, e.g. in Kaufmann’s native USA.

One arena exemplifying such experiments was the 1948 *International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture* organized by the MoMA and the subsequent exhibition staged in 1950. This event was thoroughly covered also by *Bonytt*. The report is characterized by great awe and respect for the initiative and its results, e.g. Eames’ fibre-glass chair, but also regret that none of the numerous Nordic entries were awarded. In closing, the article laconically notes that the jury gave so-called *honourable mentions* to one Danish entry by Abel Sørensen and one Finnish by Ilmari Tapiovaara, but also to an entry “designed by Ivo Pannaggi, who is apparently supposed to be a Norwegian.”⁴³ [Figure 9-1] The ambivalent attitude towards the USA suggested here will be discussed further below.

In a testimony seemingly at odds with his earlier statements on the role of the design in the industry, Jens von der Lippe argued for a less artsy attitude among designers by legitimatizing, even encouraging the commercial and consumerist aspects of design:

[The designer] must work for the factory, not against it, he must make the factory’s

39. *Ibid.* p 17 (“To værelser og kjøkken er den sosiale ramme vi ønsker å konsentrere våre krefter om.”)

40. *Ibid.* (“Det skal ha tilknytning til en kjent tradisjon. Alle ytterliggende eksperimenter virker fremmed og fiendtlig på dette publikum.”)

41. *Ibid.* (“All kultur er vekselvirkning mellom bredde og elite.”)

42. *Ibid.* (“middelmådig og småborgerlig”)



Figure 9-1: Illustrations from *Bonytt*'s coverage of the MoMA *International Competition for Low-Cost Furniture*. Left: 1. prize in the chair category was awarded to this design by the American Don Knorr, which has later been completely overshadowed by the 2. prize winning fibre-glass chair by Ray and Charles Eames. Right: The prototype chair of laminated wood designed by Ivo Pannaggi—"who is apparently supposed to be a Norwegian", as *Bonytt* put it—which received honourable mention in the same competition. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 10, 1950)

43. N.N., "Resultater av en internasjonal konkurranse" in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 95. This wording suggests that the anonymous author of the *Bonytt* article either did not know of anyone by the name of Ivo Pannaggi, or that he was provoked by the assumption that Pannaggi was Norwegian. As the illustration shows, his contribution to the MoMA competition certainly did not resemble the Nordic design tradition. And the fact of the matter is that Ivo Pannaggi was, as the name suggests, a native Italian, who had achieved international success in the 1920s as a painter in the Italian futurist tradition, and studied architecture at Bauhaus until its closure in 1933. He moved to Norway in 1939, where he would remain until 1971. In Oslo, he worked at the acclaimed architectural firms Arneberg & Poulsson and Rinnan & Tveten, as well as at Riksarkitekten, before he opened his own practice in 1957: Arne Gunnarsjaa, *Arkitekturleksikon* (Oslo: Abstrakt, 1999) p 581. Regarding Pannaggi's work in Italy, the Italian art historian Filiberto Menna has described him as representing the "*linea funzionalista*" alongside e.g. Vinicio Paladini as opposed to other futurists like Arnaldo Ginna and Virgilio Marchi whose work is described as belonging to the *linea "fantastica"*: Filiberto Menna, "Avanguardia e Protodesign" in Anty Pansera (ed.), *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988) p 29. Pannaggi's Futurist manifesto published in 1922 is reproduced in: Germano Celant (ed.), *Architecture & Arts: 1900/2004—A Century of Creative Projects in Building, Design, Cinema, Painting, Sculpture* (Milan: Skira, 2004) p 100. In 1955, he was one of the founding members of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)), and in 1957 he was represented at the Norwegian pavilion at the *XI Triennale* exhibition in Milan, in his native Italy: Jan Romsaas, *Thorbjørn Rygh og hans rolle i bakgrunnen for, og opprettelsen av Industridesignerutdannelsen i Oslo* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 27. Whichever of the two suggested reasons for the wording in the *Bonytt* article is correct—whether he in 1950 after 11 years at the core of the Norwegian architectural community was unknown to the author or not "Norwegian" enough—it is equally peculiar and interesting. A fact that supports the plausibility of the latter alternative is that an article written by Pannaggi himself was published in *Bonytt* only a year later: Ivo Pannaggi, "Over maksimum" in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 186-187

products better, more profitable, more appropriate and attractive to the public, more saleable for the dealers, he must sense the public's demands and desires when they are current—and before they are current.⁴⁴

These surprisingly consumption- and trend-friendly reflections were brought forward in an ode-like article in tribute to the Swedish ceramist Wilhelm Kåge, design manager at Gustavsberg porcelain factory. So, despite a wording which empowers untraditional aspects like the consumers' taste, the owners' profit and marketing conditions, von der Lippe had not by any means given up the ideal of the designer combining artistic and commercial production.

A similar, positive attitude towards trends, marketing and consumer's behaviour was expressed by Arne Remlov in his report from a panel discussion on the designer's role in Norwegian industry. With an analogy to the French fashion industry, he suggests that the Norwegian manufactured goods industry should "launch" their designers and build public images of their names—all in the name of marketing strategies and sales potential. Remlov saw such strategies emerging in our neighbouring countries, and feared Norway would lose out in the hardening international competition. He accused Norwegian industry of withholding the designers' name, not as a deliberate strategy, but due to "gaucherie and lack of flare for the subtleties of public relations."⁴⁵

This is quite the U-turn: In a decade, the methods and inner workings of fashion, trends and public taste had been transformed from the most dreadful sin into a legitimate marketing tool on the service on good design. However drastic this may seem, the explanation is probably quite simple and profane. From the mid-fifties onwards, tariff barriers fell like dominoes, and import restrictions were relieved. For the Norwegian manufactured goods industry, this meant increased foreign competition on the formerly so shielded domestic market, and a need for finding export markets for the rapidly growing production volumes. Remlov's suggestion to turn Norwegian (or Scandinavian/Nordic) design into the equivalent of French fashion makes more sense when viewed against this backdrop.

This did not, though, make Remlov an advocate of seasonal changes in line with the American *styling*, which was, as we shall see later, much despised and ridiculed in design communities all across Europe. Quite the contrary; in a *Bonytt* special issue on furniture in 1954, he warned against the exaggerated chase for novelty and experiments, and requested a more thorough and conscientious product development: "[P]erhaps [we] should work with forms we are familiar with... rather than with the mannered, Southern European formal expressions".⁴⁶ Against this conservative, cautious attitude, designer Thorbjørn Rygh petitioned for "[a] greater interest in the designer behind the furniture",

44. Jens von der Lippe, "Wilhelm Kåge—Kunstner og håndverker i en storbedrift" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 70 ("[Brukskunstneren] må arbeide for fabrikkens, ikke mot den, han må gjøre fabrikkens produkter bedre, lønnsommere, mere hensiktsmessige og tiltalende for publikum, lettere salgbare for de handlende, han må fornemme krav og ønsker hos publikum når de er aktuelle—og før de er aktuelle.")

45. Arne Remlov, "Blir designeren hørt?" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 102 ("klossethet og mangel på sans for publisitetsarbeidets finesser.")

46. Arne Remlov, "Møbler 1954" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 153-154 ("[K]anskje [vi] heller bør arbeide med former vi er fortrolige med... enn med de outrerte, sydeuropeiske formuttrykk")

and made a curious analogy to the artist's "signature as the reassuring and (or) decisive" factor when purchasing a painting.⁴⁷ What is puzzling about Rygh's attempt to liken the role of the designer to that of the artist is that Rygh the following year, in 1955, would co-found the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen))—an organization whose very existence to a considerable degree was validated by the perceived need to distance design from the sphere of art. This only goes to show how different actors are capable of applying different arguments and logics, depending on the specific context and agenda.

9.4 Taking industry seriously

The development of the Norwegian manufactured goods industry after the war, like the emergence of Figgjo Fajanse A/S and Stavangerflint A/S, took place in a rather peculiar economic and political situation. Before the war, most of the ceramic products (at least in the lower price range) sold in Norway was imported from countries like Germany, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain and Sweden.⁴⁸ But after the war, import restrictions and rationing systems effectively shut the foreign manufacturers out of the Norwegian market and made domestic business ventures like Figgjo and Stavangerflint financially viable.

But, as we have just seen, not everything these new, inexperienced factories put out was applauded by the design establishment. Although these fumbling first steps could partially be written off as "children's diseases", the odd envious look was sent to brothers in better standing. Jens von der Lippe presented a new earthenware service, *Domus*—designed by Gunnar Nylund, from the Swedish manufacturer Rörstrand under the heading "A good earthenware service" ("Et godt fajanseservice") [Figure 9-2].⁴⁹ It was a shame, according to von der Lippe, that this product was not available in Norway, because if it had been, it could function as an ideal or prototype for our domestic manufacturers, as well as the consumers. In the advent of such better times, a presentation in *Bonytt* might have a similar cultivating effect?

Some aspects of von der Lippe's praise of the Rörstrand service is worth dwelling on for a moment. His attitude towards the industrial design process seems to have changed quite dramatically on some vital points since his last utterances on the subject. Firstly, he stresses that *Domus* is the result of a product development process carried out in "a team where everyone has contributed, management and artist, skilled worker and craftsman, assistant and engineer".⁵⁰ Gone is the formerly so prominent notion of the artisan-craftsman as the autocratic genius, the all-embracing incarnation of good design. But his use of the word "artist" ("kunstner") to identify the designer tells us that he had not lost

47. Torbjørn Rygh, "En møbeltegners syn" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 154 ("[E]n større interesse for tegneren bak møblene... signaturen som... det betryggende og (eller) avgjørende.")

48. Arne Remlov, "Industrielt pottemakeri" in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 30-31

49. Jens von der Lippe, "Et godt fajanseservice" in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 46-47

50. *Ibid.* p 47 ("et team hvor alle har ydet sitt, ledelse og kunstner, fagarbeider og håndverker, hjelpearbeider og ingeniør")



Figure 9–2: Service *Domus* (earthenware) Rörstrand, ca 1951. Designer: Gunnar Nylund. The ideal earthenware service, according to *Bonytt*'s Jens von der Lippe. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 11, 1951)

contact with his old self. And in his review of an exhibition of Italian arts and crafts shown in Oslo in 1952, he asked: “Where shall the craft go, then, in the midst of all the industry? We probably do not need it for all our reasonable needs. But maybe we have other needs as well?”⁵¹ This remark heralds, in a way, the emerging debate on the “division of labour” between crafts and industrial design and the craft’s re-orientation away from utilitarian objects towards the sphere of free art, as we shall return to later.

Perhaps even more surprising is his acknowledgement of subjective taste as a valid and prominent factor of design: “The designer must know his public’s taste”.⁵² This did not, however, mean that the designer should throw away his modernist ethics and yield to consumerist hedonism. The formal expression of *Domus* was still safely within a modernist idiom, in that it was “salutarily free from conventional inanities, and it is beautiful in a undemonstrative way.”⁵³

51. Jens von der Lippe, “Kuriøse krukker” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 99 (“Hvor skal håndverket gjøre av sig efterhvert, midt oppe i all industrien? Vi har vel ikke bruk for det til alle våre nøkterne behov. Men kanskje vi har andre behov også?”)

52. Jens von der Lippe, “Et godt fajanseservise” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 47 (“Desinatøren [sic!] må kjenne sitt publikums smak”)

53. *Ibid.* (“velgjørende fritt for banaliteter, og det er vakkert på en stillfarende måte.”)

The exhibition *Good Design (God form)* organized by the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) in November 1951 might also be seen as a tribute to the “undemonstrative beauty”.⁵⁴ Unlike the earlier exhibitions put on by the association, which had predominantly focused on interior environments, *Good Design* targeted the design of individual products, and—perhaps more importantly—the range of exhibited objects shattered the traditional boundaries of “objects for the home”. The exhibition included e.g. sports accessories, industrial machinery, tools, boat gear, and various utility articles.⁵⁵ Thus, the *Good Design* exhibition can be viewed as a first indication of a shift towards, or perhaps rather an inclusion of, a more industrially oriented focus, and as such, it was clearly inspired by the work of the British Council of Industrial Design, e.g. in connection with the exhibitions *Britain Can Make It* (1946) and *Festival of Britain* (1951).⁵⁶

Another sign of the new awareness regarding industrial design and the broadening of the field of design/applied art, is that *Bonytt* in 1953 ran an article entitled “Industrial Design” written by Åke H. Huldt, president of the Swedish Applied Art Association (Svenska Slöjdföreningen), which had originally been published in the National Museum of Decorative Arts in Trondheim’s (Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum) yearbook for 1951.⁵⁷ The article is illustrated with a multitude of products which previously hardly had been common sights in *Bonytt*, such as a toaster, a calculator, a speaker, and packaging. But the radicalism of Huldt’s presentation should not be overstated, because among his examples of outstanding “industrial design” are a Georg Jensen silver box designed by M. Stephensen and a J. Tostrup silver tray designed by Grete Prytz Korsmo.⁵⁸ Although these two products are surprisingly simple both in terms of formal expression and production methods, the exclusiveness of the material and the traditions of the trade tie them closer to the realm of “applied art” than to “industrial design”.

54. It is the in english versions of the captions (*Bonytt* introduced bilingual captions in the late 1940s) in von der Lippe’s article the exhibition’s Norwegian title *God form* has been translated into *Good Design*, much like the name of the organizer—the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) is translated into the “Norwegian Industrial Design Association”. Disregarding the curious substitution of the national association for the Oslo chapter, these translations demonstrate the problems and challenges that arose when terms and phenomena like “brukskunst” were to be used in english and terms and phenomena like “design” were to be used in Norwegian. This theme spawned an article in its own right where von der Lippe explained the difficulties and suggested that “design” and its derived words were introduced to the Norwegian language instead of searching for suitable translations. Jens von der Lippe, “Underlige norske ord om design” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 177. Despite the wording in *Bonytt*’s English captions, I have chosen to translate e.g. “Foreningen Brukskunst” into “the Applied Art Association”, partly due to the fact that the name dates back to 1918 and that the term “brukskunst” is not equivalent to any general understanding of the term “industrial design”, and partly to avoid confusion when the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk Gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) enters the scene in 1955.

55. Jens von der Lippe, “Lavmelt propaganda i Wergelandsveien” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 46-49

56. Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 117-121. For more on *Britain Can Make It*, see: Patrick Joseph Maguire and Jonathan M. Woodham (eds.), *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain: Britain Can Make it Exhibition of 1946* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997) For more on *Festival of Britain*, see: Becky E. Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation: The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)

57. Åke H. Huldt, “Industrial Design” in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 162-165

58. Åke H. Huldt, “Industrial design” in Thorvald Krohn-Hansen (ed.), *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1951* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1952) p 48-55. These two illustrations are, however, not included in the *Bonytt* reprint.

However, this infatuation with utilitarian form and the design of “non-designed” objects such as machinery and tools, did not signal a return to the literal, orthodox interpretation of Sullivan’s maxim *form follows function* or an instrumentalist, corbusierian attitude. In a moment of self-criticism, Odd Brochmann admitted that

We have deluded ourselves and our clients into believing that things that are developed to be adequate, good and correct, that these things are also positively beautiful, that they have an intrinsic artistic value. Which they obviously do not have.⁵⁹

Architectural professor Brochmann was tired of what he saw as a growing tendency of overrating the meanings and values of objects, and advocated a new asceticism. A utilitarian object should be as anonymous as possible, and not “try to unite artistic and utilitarian demands in a importunate manner.”⁶⁰ His controversial statements challenged the very essence of the applied art movement (*brukskunstbevegelsen*) by denouncing the idea of unity of artistic and utilitarian values.

This polarization, or diversification of the design field entered the consciousness of the practitioners as well. In 1953, *Bonytt* handed the task of reviewing the Applied Art Association in Oslo’s (*Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo*) autumnal exhibition over to Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik’s design manager Tias Eckhoff.⁶¹ In his evaluation of the furniture section, he makes an interesting point regarding the diverging relations between market intentions, production methods and design:

The most exciting in this exhibition... was... *Arne Hiorth’s* chairs (manufacturer Hiorth & Østlyngen A/S) and especially his arm chair in tubular steel. Here, the problem of style is not a specific question, but is intimately connected with production technology and material. Arne Hiorth’s work is, as far as I can see, among the objects at the exhibition which seem to show the way ahead and which make us see the problem of handicrafts versus mass production (or “industrial design” if you wish) more clearly. The arm chair in tubular steel is presumably “good design” in its best sense. In large series this chair must be possible to manufacture cheaply... Like the good serial product, it is also easy to assemble. It is crated in a flat package and assembled by he who shall sit in it... Arne Hiorth’s chair... bears comparison with Fritz Hansen’s... chair or with the best of English and American mass-produced furniture... As an opposite to these mass-produced chairs, it was interesting to see *Johan Fr. Monrad’s* “Boardroom”, (designer *Bjørn Ianke*). For this rather serious environment where money is not the most pressing issue, the pure handicraft is appropriate, and Monrad is one of our few exponents for the truly noble woodcraft.⁶²

Eckhoff here demonstrates how the design field spanned a wide territory, but seems to imply that the greatest future challenges and importance would lay within the concepts “industrial design” and “good design”, understood as design developed in intimate relation with production, material, logistics and market factors, as well as having a social

59. Broddock Mann (pseudonym) , “Tanker om ting—overskuddet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 160 (“Vi har innbilt oss selv og våre klienter at ting som er utviklet til å bli hensiktsmessige, gode og riktige, at disse tingene også er positivt vakre, at de har en kunstnerisk egenverdi. Hva de selvfølgelig ikke har.”)

60. Odd Brochmann, “Hus Grete” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 165 (“prøver å forene kunstneriske og bruksmessige krav på påtrengende måte.”)

61. Tias Eckhoff, “Brukskunsts høstmønstring 1953” in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 193-197

vocation. The irony is, of course, that Hiorth's knock-down chair was manufactured by a traditional cabinet maker, not a modern furniture factory, and never became the popular product Eckhoff hoped [Figure 9-3].⁶³

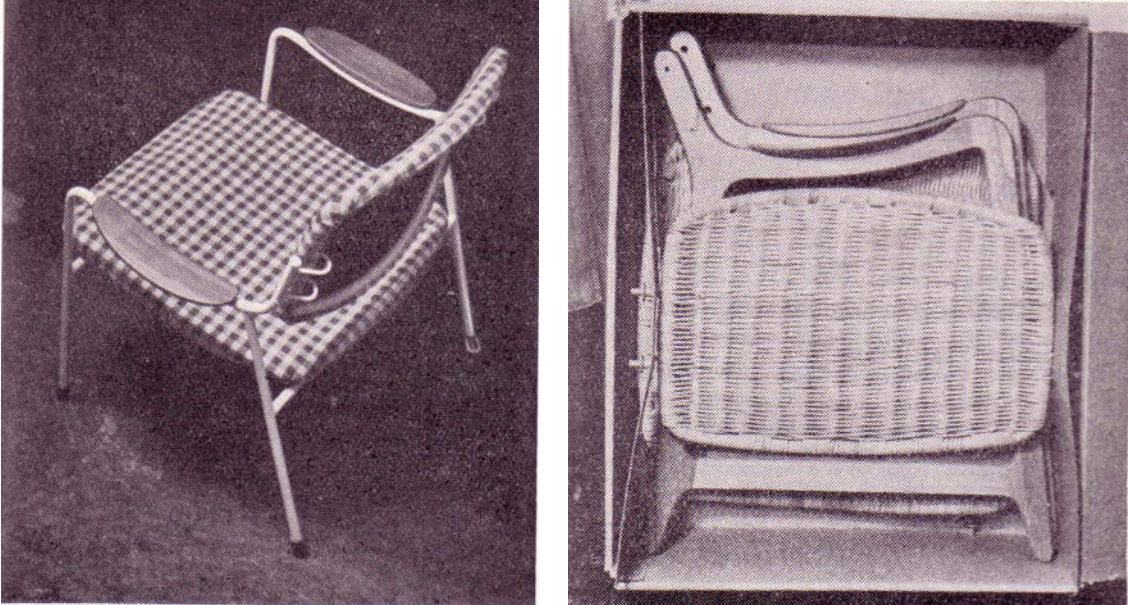


Figure 9-3: Knock-down arm chair. Hiorth & Østlyngen, ca 1953. Designer: Arne Hiorth. Assembled (left) and packed (right). (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 13, 1953)

Tias Eckhoff belongs to the first generation of SHKS-trained designers that would work almost exclusively with industrial products throughout his career, and first made a name for himself with the porcelain service *The fluted one* (*Det riflede*) produced by Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik from 1952. Its design, and especially the abstract relief decor to which its name alluded, is worth a comment because it taps into the above mentioned

62. *Ibid.* p 194-195 (“Det mest spennende på denne utstilling... var... *Arne Hiorths* stoler (produsent Hiorth og Østlyngen A/S) og spesielt hans armstol i stålrør. Her kommer stilproblemet ikke inn som noe spesifikt spørsmål, men i intim kontakt med fremstillingsteknikk og materiale. Arne Hiorths arbeider er så vidt jeg kan forstå av de tingene på utstillingen som synes å vise veien fremover og som får oss til å se problemstillingen kunsthåndverk kontra serieproduksjon (eller “industrial design” om man vil kalle det så) i et bedre lys. Armstolen i stålrør er vel “good design” i ordets beste forstand. I store serier må denne stolen kunne lages billig... Som det gode serieprodukt er stolen også enkel å montere sammen. Den pakkes flatt og skrues sammen av den som skal sitte i den... Arne Hiorths stol... tåler sammenligning med Fritz Hansens... stol eller med det beste av engelske og amerikanske seriemøbler... Som motpol til disse seriefremstilte stolene er det interessant å se *Johan Fr. Monrads* “Direksjonsrom”, (tegner *Bjørn Ianke*). For dette litt seriøse miljø hvor det ikke sees så nøye på noen kroner, er det rene kunsthåndverk på sin plass, og Monrad er en av våre få eksponenter for det virkelige edle snekkerhåndverk.”)

63. It might be noted that Eckhoff in his review gave honourable mention to two designers who later would be employed by Figgjo: Hermann Bongard (contract/freelance designer for Figgjo 1956-1963) was praised for his glass in a “cultivated and controlled style” for Hadeland Glassverk, and Kåre B. Fjeldsaa (design manager for Stavangerflint A/S from 1958, designer for the merged company Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S from 1968, and design manager from 1973) was applauded for his studio pottery in “a rather primitivistic style, which actually agrees well with the rustic clay”. This rustic expression would come to influence the Stavangerflint products of the 1960s heavily. *Ibid.* (“kultivert og behersket stil” “en litt primitivistisk stil, som i grunnen stemmer godt overens med det rustike [sic] leirgodset.”)

debate on “decor in our time”. It is a prime example of a type of decor that was not only accepted, but flat out admired by the modernist establishment—at least when it could be justified by rationalist arguments. The fluted relief decor along the rims was, according to the designer, motivated by its ability to obscure flaws in the material and thus reduce the percentage of cups rejected in the production.⁶⁴ Such a rational and potentially democratic explanation for something so aesthetically pleasing and decoratively effective must have sounded like music in the ears of the modernist congregation. The service was based on Eckhoff’s diploma work from the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS). Prototypes of it had been shown already at the 1950 exhibition *What we can (Hvad vi kan)*, and it made Eckhoff an instant hit and secured him a position as probably the most celebrated Norwegian designer for decades to come.⁶⁵

Arne Remlov had often accused the larger and more industrially oriented manufacturers of being dilatory and conservative in comparison with the more modern expressions of the craft-based manufacturers and workshops/studios. It was thus with great satisfaction and pleasure that he in his review of the second post-war Norwegian furniture fair in 1952 could declare that

the so-called “applied art range” has caught on completely with the manufacturers... the lighter, architect-designed furniture has so to speak taken over the entire field... I will merely point to the particularly gratifying fact that many of the West Norwegian factories now have joined the right path... The influence of the furniture designers is now very noticeable.⁶⁶

While the domestically produced furniture which had previously been characterized as good design in *Bonytt* chiefly were made by cabinet makers in the major cities in limited series by craft-intensive methods, the manufacturers Remlov refers to here—most of them located in Western Norway—were furniture factories, making cheaper furniture on a larger scale by more mechanized and industrialized production methods.⁶⁷ The many new, young businesses within the Norwegian manufactured goods industry established in the immediate post-war period were slowly being recognized by the design community for being capable of turning out, if not exquisite, then at least laudable products—when they were at their best (i.e. at their most “modern”), that is.

Excessive refinement in forms and materials, however, was frowned upon in the Norwegian design community which was still strongly marked by the social vocation. In a review of the National Museum of Decorative Arts in Trondheim’s (Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum) new, contemporary interior—*Interiør ‘52*—designed by Danish architect and furniture designer Finn Juhl, Odd Brochmann voiced a bold criticism

64. Arne E. Holm, “En porselenskopp” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 108

65. See e.g. Alf Bøe (ed.), *Tias Eckhoff—en pionér i norsk industridesign* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1998)

66. Arne Remlov, “Siste nytt her og der” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 100 (“den såkalte “brukskunstnerlinjen” har slått helt igjennom hos produsentene... de lettere arkitekttegnede møblene har erobret så å si hele terrenget... Jeg vil bare peke på det særlig gledelige i at en rekke av Vestlandsfabrikkene nu er slått inn på den rette vei... Møbelarkitektenes innflytelse er meget merkbar.”)

67. Kjetil Fallan, “Visionaries and Weathercocks—Norwegian Furniture Design c. 1920-1965” in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, 2003, p 100-113

[Figure 9-4]. Although he justified the sophisticated interior's place in the museum as a



Figure 9-4: *Interiør '52* at the National Museum of Decorative Arts in Trondheim (Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum) Designed by Finn Juhl. In the lower right corner, his *Chieftain Chair* with what Odd Brochmann referred to as “four omelettes” to sit on. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 13, 1953)

documentation of typical mid-century design, in the same way its 1901 Henry van de Velde interior documents the *fine de siècle* expressions, Juhl's sophisticated and refined designs did not agree with Brochmann.⁶⁸

To Brochmann, Juhl's designs were excesses in expressionism, elaborateness and aestheticism.⁶⁹ Especially the Chieftain chair made by cabinetmaker Niels Vodder provoked him: “[H]is enormous and completely showy armchair... is to me a personal insult... A tremendous racket to hang these four omelettes!” Describing the seating pad, back plate and arm rests as omelettes might not be striking, but at least original and brave, given Juhl's international fame and appreciation. Brochmann continued, asserting that “Finn Juhl is a pure aesthete... Mass production and other social tasks are irrelevant to him... He is... thus dangerous when he formes a school”.⁷⁰ Brochmann's disgust for

68. Odd Brochmann, “Finn Juhl Nordenfjelds” in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 91-93

69. It might be mentioned here that others, although agreeing with Brochmann's description of Juhl's furniture as expressionist and aestheticist, could see this as potentially positive values: Håkon Kragerus, “Møbler til å eie” in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 176-177

this elaborate and refined design might very well originate from his affiliation with the highly progressive Socialist Architects' Association (Socialistiske arkitekters forening—SAF) during his student years at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges tekniske høgskole—NTH) in the 1930s.⁷¹

In any case, Brochmann embodied a dualism typical of the environment in which industrial design was about to state its case: On the one hand, he denounced the idea that what was commonly seen as strictly utilitarian objects (tools, instruments, etc.) had an intrinsic beauty and thus constituted models for designers, and on the other hand, he was disgusted by the elitist aestheticism represented by Juhl. The realities of the increasingly industrialized system of manufacture and its implications for the design professions became more and more hard-felt in the 1950s, but reactions to it remained ambiguous and unresolved. A lot of negotiations and translation work was required for the applied art community to come to terms with these developments.

9.5 Conclusion

This chapter has traced some of the discussions led in the design community in the 1950s, analysing some of the translations and negotiations made in order to build design networks. The first part explored how the social vocation of the immediate postwar period in the 1950s slowly seemed to dwindle away proportional to the material shortages, leaving room for the return to artistic creativity and expression as central tenets of design—at least for some of the more prominent and conservative elements of the applied art community.

The mid-part of this chapter took on the re-emerging debate on manufacturing systems, this time centred on the at times worrying prospects of industrial mass-production and its potential ramifications for design in Norway. Industrial experimentation was often seen as exciting, but also rather unrealistic in such a small country. Traditional craft-based manufacture still had powerful supporters in the design community, presenting this system as the more responsible and creatively advanced alternative. This position also seems to be in line with the generally uneasy attitude towards the commercial aspects of design. Whereas such aspects certainly were acknowledged, it was less problematic to situate design in the realm of culture than in the realm of commerce.

As modern manufactured goods industry became more widespread in Norway throughout the 1950s, also the applied art community began taking industry more seriously. The notion that modern industry had implications for design became more and

70. Odd Brochmann, "Finn Juhl Nordenfjelds" in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 91-93 ("[H]ans veldige og helt kustferdige lenestol... virker på meg som en personlig fornærmelse... Et veldig spetakkel for å få hengt opp disse fire omeletter!... Finn Juhl er en rendyrket estetiker... Masseproduksjon og andre sosiale oppgaver står ham fjernt... Han er... derfor farlig når han danner skole")

71. Odd Brochmann, *Rent Bord—En historie om funksjonalismen og funksjonalistene i Norge* (Oslo: Arkitektnytt, 1987) p 11-49

more evident during this period, and the particularities of industrial design compared to the wider design field became a widely discussed but not much agreed upon issue.

The next chapter will continue investigating the negotiation of design networks and the translation work carried out in the Norwegian design community, but will focus on the international relations.

10 Foreign forms: Internationalising Norwegian design discourse

10.1 Introduction

As we have already seen, the Norwegian design community made good use of the regained freedom to travel abroad in the late 1940s. In the beginning, though, these international relations were primarily of a personal character. In the 1950s, on the other hand, organisational, institutional, official and collective initiatives and events promoting international relations became one of the major concerns of the design community. What prompted this development, and what form did these relations take? Why did it become so important to promote Norwegian design abroad, and what exactly did the exhibitions seek to convey? This chapter will investigate some of these efforts and events, taking special interest in the at times less than straightforward relation between their rhetorics and pronounced motivation on the one hand and the character of the actual manifestations on the other.

The chapter starts out by discussing the very first exhibitions of Norwegian design abroad after the war, organised in Sweden, Denmark, England and the USA in the early 1950s. Then follows an inquiry into the ambivalent relationship the Norwegian design community had to the USA, its design, its industry and its popular culture. Special attention will be paid to the Norwegian contribution to the *Design in Scandinavia* exhibition, the major promotional event for Nordic design in North America. Overall, it is safe to say that America represented both fears and desires in 1950s Norway.

The *Triennale di Milano* exhibitions were probably the most prestigious international venues/events in the design world in the 1950s. This was the place to see and be seen for those seeking international acclaim. Norway's participation in the tenth and eleventh manifestations in 1954 and 1957 are analysed in the latter half of this chapter, highlighting their many differences. While the former can be described as an attempt at selling art as design, the latter might be seen as an attempt at selling design as science. These two events are also symptomatic of developments and discrepancies in the Norwegian design community in the mid-1950s.

10.2 Slowly stepping out

As discussed above, the design community began to (re-)build international relations in the late 1940s, both officially and privately. For instance, the architect Arne Korsmo, together with his silversmith wife Grete Prytz Korsmo, travelled to the USA in 1949-50 on a study tour. He had a celebrated architectural practice, and collaborated with his wife

in the design of silver products for J. Tostrup (later also enamelled steel products for Cathrineholm).¹ Sigfried Giedion, the secretary of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), had appointed him leader of the Progressive arkitekters gruppe, Oslo, Norge (PAGON), a Norwegian chapter of CIAM.² In addition, he taught at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS). In the USA, the Korsmo's became acquainted with the famous designers Ray and Charles Eames, and they visited the Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) in Chicago.³

This close encounter with the American design elite had a strong impact on Korsmo, and produced specific results both in his own production and, more importantly, through his position at SHKS. Korsmo applied many of the principles he had learned in his teaching, and two years later, in 1952, a summer course in industrial design with visiting lecturers from the Institute of Design in Chicago were held in Oslo.⁴ Presenting a photo exhibition dedicated to the teaching methods of Institute of Design, IIT, mounted at SHKS, Korsmo wrote in *Bonytt*:

Both through analysis and the human shaping ability, the aim must be to unite the craftsman's model-making abilities with the industry's method of repetition through the machine.⁵

As we see, even a progressive modernist like Korsmo, with a large and exclusive international network and intimate knowledge of design practice and education in the heartland of industrial mass-production, still considered craft-based skills essential to design.⁶

Odd Brochmann was far less enthused by the abstract scientification of design which he believed the methods employed at Institute of Design, IIT, represented: "Is our task merely to adjust to everything that happens...?" In Brochmann's view, this obsession with abstract formal analysis would "do more harm than good" and obscure the artistic,

-
1. For a survey of Grete Prytz Korsmo's (now Kittelsen) enamel work and design, see: Jan-Lauritz Opstad, *Grete Prytz Kittelsen—emaljekunst og design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1978)
 2. The Swiss engineer and art historian Giedion was one of the co-founders of CIAM in 1928, and became the self appointed official historian of modern architecture. His most famous work is: Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: the growth of a new tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949)
 3. Astrid Skjerven, "Ny helhet" in Jon Brønne, Eirik T. Bøe and Astrid Skjerven, *Arne Korsmo—Arkitektur og design* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2004) p 157-202. It should perhaps be mentioned that Arne Gunnarsjaa asserts that Giedion gave the task of *forming* the PAGON group to his student and Korsmo's friend and colleague Christian Norberg-Schulz: Arne Gunnarsjaa, *Arkitekturleksikon* (Oslo: Abstrakt, 1999) p 286. The most plausible scenario seems to be that Norberg-Schulz was given the assignment to establish the group, since he had been Giedion's student, but that Korsmo was chosen as the group's leader because he was 26 years older than Norberg-Schulz.
 4. Åke H. Huld, "Industrial design" in Thorvald Krohn-Hansen (ed.), *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1951* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1952) p 51
 5. Arne Korsmo, "Formgivningens A.B.C." in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 16 ("Både gjennom analyse og den menneskelige formende evne må målet være å knytte håndverkerens følsomhet og modellbyggende evne sammen med industriens repetisjonsmetode ved maskinen.")
 6. Even in his proposal for a new school of architecture and design at the University of Oslo, he was very insistent regarding the importance of craft-based skills: Arne Korsmo, "En ny skole for arkitektur og formgivning. Idéforslag til et institutt tilknyttet Universitetet" in *Arkitektmytt* Vol. 3, 1954, p 100-105

creative element he considered to be the core property of any design process: “But the glow, the idea, where do they find that?”⁷

This newly fledged contact with the outside world, which resulted in both enthusiastic inspiration and disapproval, was soon to be converted into extrovert activities as well. For apparent reasons, both the applied art association(s), the designers and the industry had since the end of the war concentrated their efforts on the domestic scene. Both the reconstruction efforts, the industrial development, the material shortages, and the import restrictions contributed to this situation. But in the early 1950s, the Norwegian industry and design community lifted their eyes and started to gaze at the horizon.

The first years of the new decade saw the first major outward looking initiatives since the war in the form of exhibitions abroad, and these were manifestations very different in character. For one thing, Norway was represented alongside her neighbouring countries at the exhibition *Scandinavia at Table* organized by the British Council of Industrial Design (CoID) the autumn of 1951 at the Tea Centre in London.⁸ Here, however, I will focus on a couple of events that were specifically Norwegian rather than Scandinavian/Nordic in nature. What seems to have been the very first postwar manifestation of Norwegian design abroad actually took place already in the spring of 1950 when the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst) organized an exhibition at the Withworth Art Gallery in Manchester. The exhibition committee consisted of Birger Dahl, Bernt Heiberg, Arne Remlov and Ferdinand Aars. Given that the latter three were on the *Bonytt* editorial committee,⁹ it is surprising that the Manchester exhibition was not mentioned at all in the magazine save for a minuscule notice not saying much except for an interesting comment on the fact that

The exhibited products were not for sale “because it would have created particular import problems, but they were marked with export prices for those interested who later could get in touch with the manufacturers.”¹⁰

A less conventional event resulted from a private initiative headed by former *Bonytt* co-editor and entrepreneur Per Tannum and goldsmith Torolf Prytz, president of the National Association Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst), backed by several organizations like the National Association, the Norwegian Export Council (Norges eksportråd) and the Royal Norwegian Foreign Ministry (Det kongelige norske utenriksdepartement). This resulted in a sales exhibition entitled *Norway Designs for Living* mounted in premises at North Michigan Avenue in Chicago in May-June 1951. 90 manufacturers and craftsmen were represented, all embodying, according to Tannum, the new, modern, Scandinavian design characterized by “light colours, an honest use of

7. Odd Brochmann, “Form—filologi” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 17 (“Er vår oppgave bare å tilpasse oss efter alt som skjer...?... gjøre mer skade enn gagn... Men gløden, ideen, hvor finner de den?”)

8. Simultaneously, a commercial exhibition called *Scandinavian Design for Living* was held at Heal’s department store in London.

9. It is somewhat unclear as to when Aars formally joined the editorial board, but it is a documented fact from 1953. However, he was a frequent contributor to the magazine already in 1950.

10. N.N., “Norsk brukskunst i Manchester” in *Bonytt*, No. 8-9, 1950, p xx (“Varene var ikke tilsalgs på utstillingen fordi det ville skapt særlig importvansker, men de var merket med eksportpriser for interesserte som så kunne komme i forbindelse med produsentene.”)

material, and simple practical lines”.¹¹ Bernt Heiberg joined in and described the characteristics of Norwegian design as

a simple naturalness and versatile adaptability, marked by a delight in good materials, sound form and fresh colours, but without any sense of class distinction or other aim to produce an atmosphere of style.¹²

As an amendment to the usual phrases of honest, natural materials, supreme usability and elegant forms, it was deemed important to promote the egalitarian values—the objects were presented as conveyors of the Scandinavian social democratic traditions. Furthermore, when addressing a North American audience, it became even more important to stress that the design was based on ideology, not style. Arne Remlov saw a great peril therein, and warned against the signs that Scandinavian design in the USA was being reduced to style, which in his opinion was equivalent to mannerism.¹³

Chicago was chosen for several reasons: It was a strategic commercial centre for the Mid-West, the region is home to a vast population of Norwegian/Scandinavian decent, and it was an intellectual centre, home to e.g. the above mentioned Institute of Design and IIT—and Scandinavian design, with its relatively high prices and limited production volumes was deliberately targeting upper middle-class intellectuals as the prime potential market in the USA. As a purely commercially motivated initiative, the exhibition was intended to test the North American market’s interest in Norwegian design and thus assess the plausibility of starting regular and organized export from Norway to the USA. Arne Korsmo, who—together with designer Birger Dahl—had designed the exhibition, reported that he enjoyed the challenge, but had rather seen that the objects were subjected to jury selection—he even quoted his new friend and mentor Charles Eames to the assertion that the large quantity obscured the aesthetic quality of the exhibited products.¹⁴

The exhibition was converted into a permanent business entitled Norway Designs A/S with 78 companies as shareholders. Due to financial problems, Tannum had to close down the shop in Chicago after a few years.¹⁵ In December 1951, Tannum had accepted an order from an American furniture wholesaler for 8000 chairs. No Norwegian manufacturer—not even through inter-company collaboration—had the capacity to meet such a huge order, and the order had to be cancelled.¹⁶ This little anecdote illustrates quite effectively the problem the Norwegian manufactured goods industry faced when it throughout the 1950s ventured at export—the most lucrative market of them all, the USA, was simply too big.¹⁷ *Norway Designs for Living* failed to spur any Norwegian export to speak of, but the initiative is interesting as an offensive at an early stage trying

11. Per Tannum, “Norway Designs for Living” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 64

12. Bernt Heiberg, “The Norwegian Public and Industrial Design” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 73

13. Arne Remlov, “Norwegian Modern” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 77

14. Arne Korsmo, “Norsk brukskunst i Chicago” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 210

15. The only thing left was the company name, and Tannum used it for a home furnishing shop—Norway Designs—opened in 1957 in the Odd Fellow building in Oslo. It still exists, albeit with a slightly different business profile than it used to have.

16. Wenche Anette Johannessen, *Brukskunst-senteret PLUS—Per Tannums ønske om å etablere et designsentrum* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 13-14

to hook on to the growing popularity of Swedish and Danish design in the USA at the time.

The second extrovert initiative of 1951 was the exhibition *Norwegian Applied Art 1951* (*Norsk Brukskunst 1951*) which was shown in the Röhss Museum of Applied Art (Röhsska konstslöjdmuseet) in Gothenburg and the Danish Museum of Applied Art (Det Danske Kunstindustrimuseum) in Copenhagen in April-May [Figure 10-1]. This was a

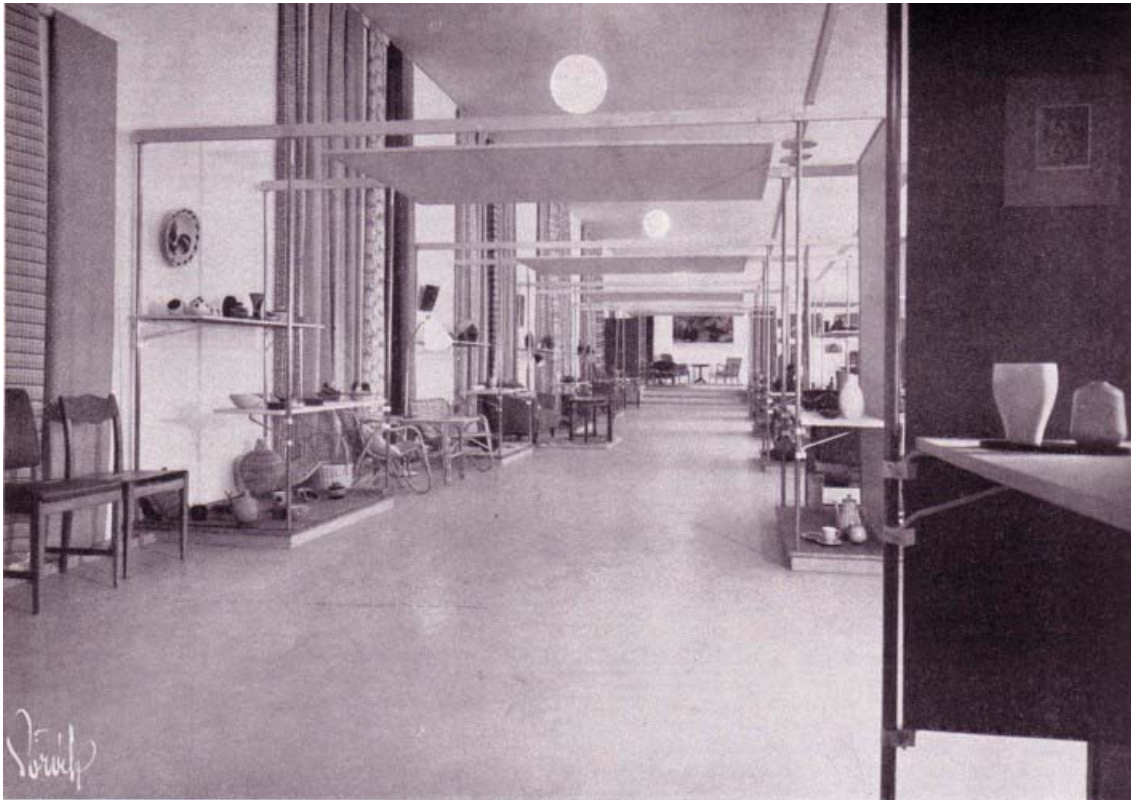


Figure 10–1: From the exhibition *Norwegian Applied Art 1951* (*Norsk Brukskunst 1951*) in the Röhss Museum of Applied Art (Röhsska konstslöjdmuseet) in Gothenburg. Exhibition design: Arne Korsmo and Birger Dahl. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 11, 1951)

more conventional museum exhibition organized by the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst), with no explicit commercial purpose. In a sense, this exhibition represented the “coming out party” for the Norwegian design community on the Scandinavian scene, as the lack of confidence demonstrated: Arne Remlov saw “signs of nervousness among Norwegian furniture

17. It was not just issues pertaining to tangible factors such as industrial structure, market size and distribution systems that complicated the dream of penetrating the lucrative US market for foreign businesses—and it was not just minute Norwegian furniture manufacturers that would experience these problems; larger European industrial enterprises also struggled hard to gain a foothold in the USA. As the Norwegian historian Thomas Brandt has shown with the case of the unsuccessful attempts at selling the Piaggio *Vespa* scooter in the USA, cultural constraints might be just as hard to overcome as political, economic and practical ones: Thomas Brandt, “La Vespa negli Stati Uniti: il trasporto culturale di una merce italiana” in *Memoria e Ricerca*, Vol. 14, No. 23, 2006, p 129-140

designers and manufacturers in having to meet Swedish and Danish colleagues on their own ground.”¹⁸ This attitude may have been legitimate, because the reviews were varied, but generally reserved. Liv Schjødt communicated the verdict to the readers of *Bonytt*:

We asked for critique and we have received it, and all in all it hardly came as a surprise. We must admit that we today do not have neither the artistic nor the craftsmanship vigour needed to create an elite production. But we must not, based on this, stay at home behind closed doors,—we must join the Scandinavian co-operation, even though we come in last—somebody must do that as well.¹⁹

This position reveals a feeling that the Norwegian design community felt that they had come a long way since the war, and through this exhibition it was time to demonstrate just how far. But since the efforts to a large extent had been focused on the reconstruction and the social vocation that followed in its wake, the elite production—which was generally perceived as the most art-like, craft-intensive end of the applied art spectrum—could not match that of our neighbouring countries.

Although this Norway’s “coming out party”—despite its shortcomings—was welcomed by *Bonytt* as a commendable initiative, they made no attempt to hide their disappointment over the fact that the debut abroad had not gone the extra mile from Scandinavian to truly international. Schjødt described it as

an unconditional tactical error that we have not joined in on the 9th Triennale [sic], the great international applied art exhibition in Milan this year. While we sit at home, the Danish, Swedish and Finnish section [sic] is the highs of the exhibition.²⁰

Her colleague Arne Remlov visited the exhibition in Milan, and reported to the *Bonytt* audience that “many were astonished that Norway did not participate. It should not recur that we do not participate in such a excellent international manifestation.”²¹ In retrospect, given the status allocated to these manifestations as high profiled showcases for elite design and effective propaganda machines—especially for the Nordic countries, *Bonytt*’s appeal for a Norwegian participation seems timely and pregnant. For instance, the Swedish design historian Kerstin Wickman has dubbed the 1950s’ *Triennali di Milano* (*IX Triennale* 1951, *X Triennale* 1954, *XI Triennale* 1957) the “Design Olympics”.²²

18. Arne Remlov, “Norwegian Modern” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 75

19. Liv Schjødt, “Sett med andres øyne” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 141 (“Vi ba om kritikk og vi har fått den og alt i alt kom den vel ikke som en overraskelse. Vi må erkjenne at vi i dag hverken har de kunstneriske eller de håndverksmessige krefter som skal til for å skape en topp-produksjon. Men vi skal ikke av den grunn holde oss hjemme bak lukkede dører,—vi skal være med i det skandinaviske samarbeidet, selv om vi er Jumbo—noen skal være det også.”)

20. *Ibid.* (“en ubetinget taktisk feil at vi ikke er blitt med på den 9de Triennale [sic], den store internasjonale brukskunstutstilling i Milano i år. Mens vi sitter hjemme er den danske, svenske og finske avdeling utstillingens høydepunkter.”)

21. Arne Remlov, “IX Triennale i Milano” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 208 (“Det forbauset mange at Norge ikke var med. Det bør ikke gjenta seg at vi ikke deltar i en slik storslagen internasjonal møstring.”)

22. Kerstin Wickman, “Design Olympics—the Milan Triennials” in Widar Halén and Kerstin Wickman (eds.), *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003) p 33-45

Norway's absence in 1951 has been attributed to financial difficulties. The warnings issued by Schjødt and Remlov were taken seriously by the proper authorities, because—as will be duly discussed later—at the 10th edition in 1954, Norway would be present in Milan.²³

Let us return to the exhibition *Norwegian Applied Art 1951 (Norsk Brukskunst 1951)* shown in Gothenburg and Copenhagen for a brief digression. The list of exhibitors (manufacturers and designers) at the end of the catalogue reveals an interesting fact. It contains the name of a recently opened earthenware factory; Stavanger Fajansefabrikk A/S—soon better known as Stavangerflint A/S.²⁴ The factory had opened only two years earlier—in 1949, the same year Figgjo had completed its transformation from pottery to earthenware factory. The two new earthenware factories were practically neighbours, and became fierce competitors for two decades before merging in 1968.

Stavanger Fajansefabrikk A/S had just been given a rather comprehensive presentation in *Bonytt*, despite the fact that their first products recently had been harshly criticized by the very same magazine.²⁵ The criticism certainly did not go unnoticed back in Stavanger, but the director Trygve Brekke found it unfair because the disapproved products should have been considered test-products rather than adequate merchandise.²⁶ But already the same fall, Ferdinand Aars selected Stavanger Fajansefabrikk's new service *Skaugum* [Figure 10-2], designed by Torbjørn Feyling, for the forthcoming exhibition *Scandinavia at Table* in London, something which was considered a great honour.²⁷ And the following year, Jens von der Lippe gave the *Skaugum* service, when shown at the Applied Art Association in Oslo's (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) 1952 autumnal exhibition, good credentials.²⁸ What is interesting to note here, is that Figgjo Fajanse A/S had not yet been mentioned at all in *Bonytt* since their conversion to earthenware factory, nor was the company represented at the Gothenburg and Copenhagen exhibition.²⁹

23. For more on the Triennali di Milano, see e.g. Anty Pansera, *Storia e cronaca della Triennale* (Milano: Longanesi, 1978)

24. Arne Remlov, et al. (eds.), *Norsk brukskunst 1951 : utstilling i Röhsska konstslöjdmuseet, Göteborg ; Det Danske Kunstindustrimuseum, København*. (Oslo: LNB, 1951) (unpaged). The list of exhibitors also contained the name Kaare Berven Fjeldsaa, who at the time was an acclaimed studio ceramist, but would later—in 1958—team up with Stavangerflint as the company's design manager. 15 years later, following on Ragnar Grimsrud's retirement in 1973, Fjeldsaa would, together with Jørg Løve Nielsen, take over the design management of the merged (1968) company Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S. Stavanger Fajansefabrikk A/S changed its name to Stavangerflint A/S in 1952: N.N., "Stavanger Fajansefabrikk skal hete Stavangerflint A.s" in *Iste Mai*, 17.04.1952

25. Arne Remlov, "Industrielt pottemakeri" in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 30-33

26. Trygve Brekke interviewed in "Rappe fingrer former leir til Stavanger-flint" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 14.10.1950

27. N.N., "Stavanger-flint utstilles i London" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 27.09.1951 *Skaugum* was shown at *Norsk Brukskunst 1951* in Gothenburg and Copenhagen as well. The exhibition committee consisted of—in addition to Aars—Eva Nordsveen, Thv. Krohn-Hansen and Bjørn Engø (deputy): *Bonytt*, No. 10, 1951, unpaged.

28. Jens von der Lippe, "Norske serviser" in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 170-171. No Figgjo products are mentioned in the review, despite the fact that von der Lippe remarks that "in the last few years, two new earthenware factories is set up in the enterprising Rogaland" ("Nå er det i de senere år startet to nye fajansefabrikker i det driftige Rogaland.") This can only mean that either Figgjo was not represented at the exhibition, or that von der Lippe did not find their products worthy of mentioning. The former alternative seems more plausible, since *Bonytt* normally did not refrain from commenting on products deemed inferior shown at exhibitions.

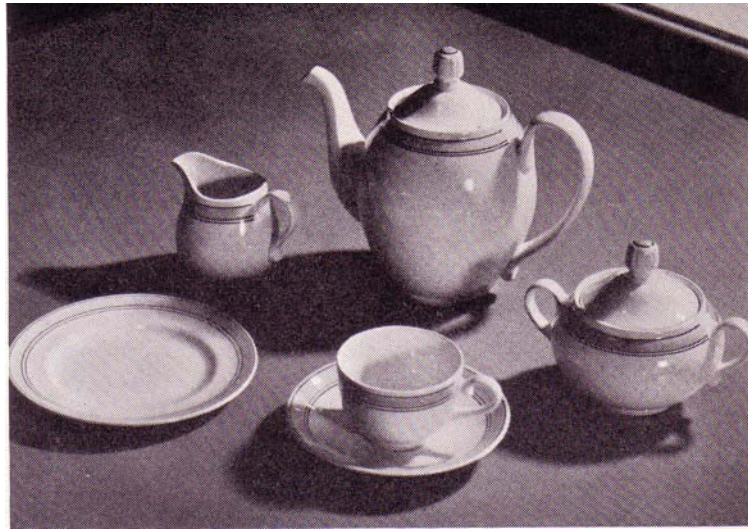


Figure 10–2: *Skaugum* service (earthenware) Stavangerflint A/S, 1951-52. Designer: Torbjørn Feyling. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 12, 1952)

10.3 America—fears and desires

In 1950s Norway, there was no shortage of multiple or ambivalent attitudes towards the USA. This was the era of the geopolitics of the cold war, NATO membership, Marshall aid, and the proliferation of North American popular culture. Whereas Norwegian engineers and industrial managers made pilgrimages to the USA to learn about the marvels of new technology and manufacture, the leftist political opposition to Norway’s membership in the US-dominated NATO finally resulted in the founding (1961) of a new political party; the Socialist People’s Party (Sosialistisk Folkeparti). When the movie *Rock Around the Clock* played to capacity in Oslo in 1956, the police waited outside the cinema afterwards, expecting riots. But the ambiguity seems to have been most manifest

29. One possible reason why Stavangerflint at this early stage received more attention from *Bonytt* and the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst) than Figgjo did, might be that the company recently had issued a design competition for new service models and decor patterns in collaboration with the Stavanger Applied Art Association (Stavanger Brukskunstforening). Art historian and jury member Eivind S. Engelstad complained that those who—in his opinion—were best qualified to design services, namely ceramists, had virtually ignored the competition. The results were thus not as good as the jury and the company had hoped, and no first prizes were awarded. In the category for new models, two interior architects and designers—Bjørn A. Larsen and Gjermund Barstad—got second and third prize: Eivind S. Engelstad, “Brukskunsten og bedriftene—Refleksjoner omkring en konkurranse” in *Verdens Gang*, 15.11.1950. The other jury members were: Fritjof Roaldsø—general manager of the Stavanger Society of Domestic Crafts (Husfliden i Stavanger) and chairman of Stavanger Applied Art Association (Stavanger Brukskunstforening), Torbjørn Feyling—ceramist and design manager at Stavangerflint, Arne E. Holm—architect, designer, artist and professor of architecture, and Peter M. Kolderup—tableware wholesaler. But even this otherwise seemingly laudable initiative was condemned by Arne Remlov, due to the programme’s unsatisfactory financial clauses—which he blamed on Stavangerflint and the jury. Remlov accused the competition’s programme of violating the principle of promising the designers royalties for the awarded and purchased contributions if the designs should be manufactured: Arne Remlov, “Om konkurranser” in *Bonytt* Vol. 11, 1951, p 40.

among the cultural elites—and no one expressed it more poignantly than the young writer Jens Bjørneboe in his 1952 essay “The Fear of America in us” (“Frykten for Amerika i oss”):

While Russia bids us the prospects of hell on earth—*here and now*, U.S.A. can serve up paradise on earth. But in this paradise, when one has lived here for a while, one must put make-up on the apples and oranges in order to spot them. Life must be technicolorized.³⁰

Bjørneboe had first hand experience with the desires that the USA represented, but now feared the consequences of American cultural predominance. Much in the same way, the mythical notion of “America” represented both fears and desires to the Norwegian design community.

But before discussing the American challenge, a short remark on must be made on some important inter-organizational personal relations. The title page of the 1953 volume of *Bonytt* reveals a new name on the editorial committee. Co-founder and co-editor Per Tannum had stepped down in 1947, and was replaced by Ferdinand Aars, the secretary-general of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst).³¹ Aars, who had studied architecture and run an applied art store in Oslo, was son of the first president of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst)—architect Harald Aars—and had been a board member of the association since 1930 and secretary-general since the reorganization in 1946.³² I have already

-
30. Jens Bjørneboe, “Frykten for Amerika i oss” in *Spektrum: litteratur, kunst, samfunnsspørsmål*, 1952, p 373 reprinted as Jens Bjørneboe, “Frykten for Amerika i oss” in Jens Bjørneboe, *Norge, mitt Norge—Essays om formyndermennesket* (Oslo: Pax, 1968) p 213-222 (“Mens Russland byr oss utsiktene til helvete på jorden—*her og nu*, så kan U.S.A. varte opp med paradiset på jorden. Men i dette paradiset er det slik at når man har bodd der en stund, da må man sminke eplene og appelsinene for å få øye på dem. Livet må technicoloreres.”) The cultural ambiguity towards the USA of the young Bjørneboe later turned into a political crusade. This is best expressed in the 1966 essay *We Who Loved America (Vi som elsket Amerika)*: “The title of this article is not ironic. I myself belong to those who have truly loved America, and I know how it feels... America was the land of dreams, freedom, opportunities and adventure... To me America was simply *the world*... To me the United States once symbolized everything that guaranteed the human rights which made life livable—but it did so less and less. Passion may arise with a sudden unquenchable power, but it may die out slowly. I cannot say exactly when it was, but one day I realized I no longer loved the USA. It must have been in the beginning of the 1950s. America had become dangerous, frightening, scary. It represented conformity, corruption, violence, the world's strongest military, and it aspired to become the world ruler.”: Jens Bjørneboe, “Vi som elsket Amerika” in *Orientering*, 1966 reprinted as Jens Bjørneboe, “Vi som elsket Amerika” in Jens Bjørneboe, *Vi som elsket Amerika—Essays om stormaktsgalskap, straffelyst, kunst og moral* (Oslo: Pax, 1970) p 22-23 (“Titelen på denne artikkelen er ikke ironisk. Jeg selv hører til dem som virkelig har elsket Amerika, og jeg vet hvordan det føles... Amerika var drømmenes, frihetens, mulighetens og eventyrets land... For meg var USA rett og slett *verden*... USA stod stadig for meg som et slags symbol for alt som garanterte de menneskelige friheter som gjør livet verd å leve,—men i avtagende grad. En kjærlighet kan begynne brått og voldsomt, men den dør langsomt, litt etter litt. Jeg kan ikke si med bestemthet når det var, men en dag var jeg klar over at jeg ikke lenger elsket USA. Det var vel i begynnelsen av 50-tallet. Amerika var blitt farlig, skremmende, uhyggelig. Det representerte konformisme, korrupt rettsvesen, voldsbruk, verdens sterkeste militærmakt, – og fremfor alt: USA aspirerte til verdensherredømmet.”)
31. The National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst) changed its name and organization to the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) at the annual meeting in Bergen in June 1952: Torolf Prytz, “Brukskunst under utstilling” in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 78
32. Astrid Skjerven, *Goodwill for Scandinavian Design—Lunningprisen 1951-70* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2001) p 76-77

mentioned that the *Bonytt* editor-in-chief (Arne Remlov) had been awarded membership of the National Association's board from 1947 when *Bonytt* became the association's official organ. Now, with the National Federation's secretary-general on the editorial committee, the close ties between the leadership of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) and *Bonytt* became even tighter.³³

This intricately interwoven actor network reached far beyond the ties between the National Federation and *Bonytt*. For instance, the two Norwegian members of the Lunning Prize committee—a Nordic design/craft prize awarded for the first time in 1951 to the Danish furniture designer Hans J. Wegner and the Finnish craftsman/designer Tapio Wirkkala—were Ferdinand Aars, secretary-general of the National Federation and member of the *Bonytt* editorial committee, and Torolf Prytz, president of the National Federation. The two persons constituting the national committee single-handedly picked two candidates from their respective countries, and the joint Nordic committee decided on two prize-winners. For the second edition of the prize, Aars and Prytz chose silversmith Grete Prytz Korsmo—Torolf Prytz' colleague and sister—as Norway's top nominee.³⁴ One can only assume that her brother spoke warmly and persuasively about her in the Nordic committee discussions, because Grete Prytz Korsmo was—alongside Swedish interior architect Carl-Axel Acking—awarded the Lunning Prize for 1952.³⁵ This was again duly celebrated by Aars' *Bonytt* through a portrait interview with the acclaimed winner.³⁶

Although it was a Nordic design award, it was an American company that patronized and funded the Lunning Prize.³⁷ Another event coming eastwards across the Atlantic in the fifties was the MoMA-organized exhibition that toured Europe and came to Norway in January 1954, entitled *Amerikansk Form*.³⁸ It was shown in Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger, and was met with great expectations and enthusiasm in the Norwegian design

33. In should be mentioned that the previous few volumes do not contain a title page. The editorial committee expansion could thus have taken place earlier, but it is a documented fact from 1953. The rest of the staff was unaltered: Arne Remlov, Liv Schjødt, Bernt Heiberg, Jens von der Lippe, and Håkon Stenstadvold.

34. Skjerven, *op.cit.* p 76-135. To complicate the relations even further: The father of Torolf Prytz and Grete Prytz Korsmo—Jacob Prytz—was head (1934-1956) of the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS), where his daughter got her education (1936-1941): Øistein Parmann, *Tegneskolen gjennom 150 år* (Oslo: Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole, 1970) p 296 & 317. Jacob Prytz had also been president of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst) from 1946-1948. Before the war, he had been a co-founder and chairman (1920-1939) of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst).

35. This obvious case of incapacity is strangely enough not discussed in Astrid Skjerven's doctoral dissertation on the Lunning Prize. She asserts that since Grete Prytz Korsmo was Torolf Prytz' sister, it was Ferdinand Aars alone who took the initiative in nominating her. In her discussion of the 1951 edition, Skjerven indicates that only the primary committee members (in Norway's case, Aars) had voting rights, but it seems unclear whether this was the case also in 1952. Even when allowing for these reservations regarding the formalities of nomination and voting rights, the fact remains that Torolf Prytz was present at the 1952 committee meeting, and the question of incapacity remains conspicuous as Skjerven limits her comment to "Nothing more is known about what happened during the selection process.": Skjerven, *op.cit.* p 127-132, 113 & App. I p 4 ("Mer vites ikke om hva som foregikk under juryeringen.") (quote p 132)

36. Håkon Stenstadvold, "Grete Korsmo og hennes nye små smykker" in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 81-83. For more on the Lunning Prize, see: Helena Dahlbäck Lutteman and Marianne Uggle (eds.), *The Lunning Prize* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1986)

37. The prize was named after Frederik Lunning, Danish emigrant to the USA and proprietor of the independent New York department store Georg Jensen Inc.

community. Despite its rather panegyric character, Jens von der Lippe's review of the exhibition for *Bonytt* makes an essential point: Despite the very general and comprehensive title, the exhibition far from represented an average American design. He pointed out that the exhibition was

typical of another America which exists perhaps particularly in and around the Museum of Modern Art in New York... [T]he circle associated with this exclusive museum is an elite.³⁹

And it was this MoMA-approved elite design which was applauded in the Norwegian design community—not American design in general.⁴⁰ But, one might argue, this was equally true of Norwegian design exhibitions shown abroad. As we shall see later, these were no more representative of an “average” production than the MoMA show was.

In a more in-depth review of *Amerikansk Form* published in the National Museum of Decorative Arts in Trondheim's (Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum) 1954 yearbook, designer Thorbjørn Rygh makes this distinction explicit. Like von der Lippe, he is full of awe for e.g. the experimental furniture designs by Ray & Charles Eames, George Nelson, Donald Knorr and Harry Bertoia. The lion's share of the more generic, popular and commercial American mainstream design, on the other hand, was not approved of:

America yields to formalism—the objective must suffer at the advantage of the popular. The streamline has become popular, it does not seem to bother anyone that an iron appears to be built for high speed. The car has also become a grotesque example of irrelevance. The exterior shape has become a garment which changes according to fashion, independent from developments in the car's engineering.⁴¹

The ambivalent reception of *Amerikansk Form* and American design in Norway has striking similarities with how American design was perceived elsewhere in Europe, e.g. in Italy. Here, the editor of the magazine *Stile Industria*, architect and designer Alberto

38. For more on the exhibition and other American influences on Scandinavian design, see: Widar Halén, “The Flow of Ideas USA—Scandinavia” in Halén and Wickman (eds.), *op.cit.* p 47-55

39. Jens von der Lippe, “Amerikansk virksomhet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 65 (“typisk for et annet Amerika som kanskje særlig eksisterer i og omkring Museum of Modern Art i New York... [K]retsen omkring det eksklusive museum er en elite”). It should be stressed, though, that the notion of all MoMA-approved design as “elitist” can not be understood solely in terms of the products' prices or social distinctive functions. Some very economically priced and widely popular products such as Tupperware utensils were included in MoMA's permanent collection and proudly exhibited as examples of ‘good design’ in MoMA-curated exhibitions both in the USA and in Europe in the 1950s. This fact does not, however, reduce the elitist attitude MoMA took to modern design, since these originally humble products took on the appearance of *objets d'art* when presented on par with Jackson Pollock paintings, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe buildings and Harry Bertoia chairs. No mention is made of Tupperware products in connection with the *Amerikansk Form* exhibition in Norway, but they were included in a large 1955 MoMA-curated exhibition in Paris: Gay McDonald, “Selling the American Dream: MoMA, Industrial Design and Post-War France” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2004 p 406-407 and Alison J. Clarke, *Tupperware—The Promise of Plastic in 1950's America* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999) p 36-37 & 49

40. For a history of USA design from a USA perspective and which pays as much attention to generic, popular design as to elite design, see Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited—Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979) and Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Design in the USA* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Rosselli expressed the same contempt for the “dishonesty” and “shallowness” of American styling, but he was also genuinely impressed by the positions designers held in the American industry and the possibilities that lay in the scale of the market and the advanced industrial research and experiments.⁴²

Even in a relatively large market and highly industrialized national economy like Great Britain, the design community showed a similar attitude: In 1952 Alec Davies, editor of the British Design Council’s magazine *Design*, wrote that: “American mass-production methods are hardly appropriate to the makers of say, Staffordshire bone china, Yorkshire woollen cloth, Walsall leather goods” and claimed that in the American society industry completely lacked the “aristocratic background to set such standards [of] tradition for quality” upon which most “British industries depend for their existence”.⁴³ How deep-seated this resistance towards American mass production was is poignantly summed up by the British design historian Paddy Maguire in his assertion that “even Ford UK showed very few Fordist tendencies.”⁴⁴

But discussing the suitability of manufacturing methods was one thing—the condemnation of the typical American streamlining aesthetic was virtually unisonous across Europe’s design elites.⁴⁵ The British design historian Penny Sparke has suggested that this inquisition contained a gender aspect as well: Although these products—as most industrial products at the time—largely were developed within a masculine setting,

-
41. Thorbjørn Rygh, “Amerikansk Form” in Thorvald Krohn-Hansen (ed.), *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1953* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1954) p 14 (“Amerika beveger seg langt ut i formalisme—det saklige må lide til fordel for det populære. Strømlinjen er blitt populær, det synes ikke å sjenere noen at et strykejern ser ut til å være bygget for stor fart. Bilen er også blitt et groteskt eksempel på usaklighet. Den ytre form er blitt et plagg som skifter med moten uavhengig av bilens maskintekniske utvikling.”) The same denunciation of streamlining was later wielded by Ferdinand Aars, who—as opposed to Rygh—claimed that streamlining of cars was a sound principle, but deplored that this “strangely enough [has] led to streamlined perambulators, even though speed is hardly an important characteristic of this class of vehicles, and subsequently to the streamlining of radios, jewellery and other stationary objects.”: Ferdinand Aars, *Arts and Crafts—Industrial Design in Norway* (Oslo: Dreyers forlag & The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Office of Cultural Relations, 1957) p 7
42. See e.g. Alberto Rosselli, “Incontro alla realtà” in *Stile Industria* No. 3, 1955, p 1-2 and Kjetil Fallan, *Shaping Sense—Italian post-war functionalistic design* (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2001) p 78-80
43. Alec Davies, “Editorial” in *Design*, No. 42, 1952
44. Paddy Maguire, “Craft Capitalism and the Projection of British Industry in the 1950s and 1960s” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993 p 101
45. Roland Barthes’ famous 1957 essay on the 1955 Citroën *DS 19* (designed by Flaminio Bertoni and André Lefèbvre) made an interesting comment in this respect: “There is a return to a certain degree of streamlining, new, however, since it is less bulky, less incisive, more relaxed than that which one found in the first periods of this fashion. Speed here is expressed by less aggressive, less athletic signs, as if it were evolving from a primitive to a classical form.”: Roland Barthes, “The New Citroën” in Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1973) p 89. It is fascinating how Barthes here conceded the partial influence of streamlining on the sleek forms of his beloved *déesse* but at the same time felt compelled to “rescue” or “restore” its dignity by claiming that it had risen above the “primitive” streamlining of (American) design and arrived at a “classical form” of streamlining. Even streamlining could become highbrow (and thus acceptable) when only the lowbrow allusions (“bulky”, “incisive”, “aggressive”, “athletic”) had been exorcised. Of course, as a philosopher, Barthes could hardly be said to belong to the *design* elite in France, but he surely belonged to the wider cultural elite. A design elite insider could scarcely have risked this bold rescue operation of such a tainted term. A similar ambiguity characterized Barthes’ essay on plastics, where the new technology of mass-production by injection moulding oscillated between the mundane and the miraculous: Roland Barthes, “Plastics” in Roland Barthes, *op.cit.* p 98-99

Sparke asserts that their sensuous curves, voluptuous forms and decorative details “had moved [them] into feminine culture as representatives of commerce’s efforts to express its values openly.”⁴⁶ The “good design” movement could thus be interpreted as a promotion of a masculine “genuine” modernity and a crusade against a feminine “false” modernity.

It was not, however, only the European design elites that condemned the American streamlining aesthetic. The American design elite was no less ardent in its fight against “the Chromium-plated Calf” than their European brethren.⁴⁷ In the USA, it was MoMA, and in particular its leading design ideologist Edgar Kaufmann Jr., along with the design community emerging around the Cranbrook Academy of Art who headed the mission for “Good Design”, aided by a few high-end furniture manufacturers such as Knoll and Herman Miller. But between the two extremes of MoMA elitism and populist styling, the US scene featured a large industrial design profession trying to negotiate and navigate between the two.⁴⁸

This does not mean, however, that the most *outré* mainstream commercial American design—the streamlining bonanza—was unconditionally praised by everyone not belonging to the high-brow design elites. For instance, the historian Joy Parr has argued that female Canadian consumers in the 1950s formed broad alliances negotiating anti-programmes to streamlined products from the USA and the massive marketing apparatus surrounding them in order to disassociate themselves from the consumer frenzy of their southern neighbours.⁴⁹

In Britain, perhaps even more so than in other countries, the “menace” and “vulgarization” brought on by American mass-production was most intensely symbolized and incarnated by plastics.⁵⁰ Despite the fact that Knut Greve deemed Norwegian designers incapable of working with plastics in the same passage where he disqualifies American mass-production methods in a Norwegian setting and thus

46. Penny Sparke, *As Long As It's Pink—The Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora, 1995) p 214. For discussions on “the gender gap between makers and consumers”—and design’s role in strategies to bridge it—in 1950s Canada and 1930s USA respectively, see: Joy Parr, “Shopping for a Good Stove—A Parable about Gender, Design, and the Market” in Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun (eds.), *His and Hers—Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998) p 165-187 and Regina Lee Blaszczyk, “Cinderella Stories—The Glass of Fashion and the Gendered Marketplace” in Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun (eds.), *His and Hers—Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998) p 139-164

47. Edgar Kaufmann Jr. quoted in Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Ornament* (London: Studio Vista, 1990) p 207

48. Meikle, *op.cit.* p 138-173

49. Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods—The Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999)

50. Claire Catterall, “Perceptions of Plastics: A Study of Plastics in Britain, 1945-1956) in Penny Sparke (ed.) *The Plastics Age—From Bakelite to Beanbags and beyond* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1993) p 67-73. Whereas the CoID and the rest of the more conservative British design elite detested most Americana symbols—streamlined cars and plastics alike—a more radical elite, fronted by Reyner Banham and the rest of the Independent Group, embraced it all. These conflicts regarding consumerist design as manifested in the development of “Pop” aesthetics is discussed in: Nigel Whiteley, “Pop, Consumerism, and the Design Shift” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1985, p 31-45. The cultural history of plastics within the USA has been thoroughly discussed in: Jeffrey L. Meikle, *American Plastic—A Cultural History* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1995) and an analysis of probably the most notorious of all 1950s American plastics consumer goods is undertaken in: Clarke, *op.cit.*

implicitly makes the same link, this direct symbolism was not as unambiguous in Norway as it seems to have been in Britain.⁵¹ Throughout the 1950s, the Norwegian plastics industry surged, resulting in a great number of new manufacturers and new products⁵²—designed with and without the involvement of designers belonging to the applied art community—and to the entrepreneurs and engineers of the Norwegian plastics industry, American material and production technology was a vital source of inspiration and knowledge—not a target for condemnation and indignation.⁵³ Malapropos plastics, but an interesting middle position in this respect can be found in the fact that Nils Sønnichsen, general manager of Sønnico (manufacturer of e.g. lighting fixtures), represented the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) on an Organisation for European Economic Co-Operation (OEEC) committee trip to the USA in 1959 aimed at studying American industrial design.⁵⁴

The above mentioned Lunning Prize was only one of several institutions and events that highlighted the Scandinavian or Nordic scope rather than the national focus in the 1950s. The most famous and celebrated of them all was no doubt the Nordic exhibition *Design in Scandinavia—An Exhibition of Objects for the Home* that toured the USA and Canada from 1954 to 1957, mounted in approximately 30 venues and attracting more than 650.000 visitors. One story of its origin is that the editor of the American magazine *House Beautiful*, Elizabeth Gordon, had been so impressed by the Finnish, Swedish and Danish representations at the *IX Triennale di Milano* in 1951 that she proposed the idea of an exhibition in the USA to representatives of the Swedish and Finnish applied art associations.⁵⁵ In time, the initiative grew to include Denmark and Norway on the sender side, and the American Federation of Arts on the receiving hand.⁵⁶ Another version has it that the exhibition concept originated in a meeting of the four national design organizations in Sweden in 1951.⁵⁷

Much has been written on *Design in Scandinavia*, its importance for exports and cultural goodwill and for the coining of the term and concept *Scandinavian Design*.⁵⁸ Perhaps the most scrutinising of all these texts is Ingeborg Glambek's study of the exhibition's reception and reviews in North-America, which effectively modifies the popular notion of *Design in Scandinavia* as a heroic manifestation and cultural triumph of huge proportions.⁵⁹ Retracing these steps is thus unnecessary, and also far beyond the scope of the present text.⁶⁰ However, I find it opportune and suitable to briefly discuss the Norwegian contribution to the exhibition.

The pan-Nordic campaign in North-America was mentioned beforehand in *Bonytt* in the autumn of 1953 in an article by president of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), Torolf Prytz. He stressed the significance of this opportunity in terms of export possibilities, despite that the National Federation's primary tasks were of a domestic nature.⁶¹ Due to poor finances, it was an important prerequisite for the association's involvement that the project was fully financed—the manifestations and tour by the hosting museums in America, and the planning by the Nordic governments.⁶²

51. Knut Greve, "Eksperiment eller tradisjon" in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 17

The Nordic organizing committee was made up by national sub-committees. The Norwegian committee consisted of Torolf Prytz, president of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), Ferdinand Aars, secretary general of the National Federation and member of *Bonytt*'s editorial committee, and Arne Remlov, director of the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) and editor of *Bonytt*.⁶³ Remlov was also trusted with the task of editing the exhibition catalogue.⁶⁴ It thus becomes plausible, even pregnant, to view the Norwegian contribution to *Design in Scandinavia* as an expression of the official attitudes and ideology of the National Federation, the Oslo chapter, and *Bonytt*.

How, then, did these coryphei of the Norwegian applied art movement choose to present modern Norwegian “handicrafts, applied art and industrial design”?⁶⁵ The catalogue's introductory text by the Swedish art historian Gotthard Johansson was accompanied by three photos from each of the four nations—one scenery, one building, and one interior—which presumably should illustrate the characteristics of the nations and their design. Norway was presented through a photo of a West Norwegian fjord

52. Probably the most exciting venture in the plastics industry was the attempt to establish Norway's first car manufacturer in the mid-1950s, Troll Plastkarosseri & Bilindustri. The entrepreneur Per Kohl-Larsen and his partners Erling Fjugstad and Bruno Falch developed a car with a body made of glass-fibre armed polyester. The design was adjusted from moulds Kohl-Larsen had bought from his German partner Hanns Trippel. No European manufacturer had at this time car bodies in plastics (the American 1953 GM Chevrolet *Corvette* pioneered this technology; in Europe, the East German VEB Sachsenring *Trabant P 50*, with a body made not from fiberglass but from an outdated Bakelite-like plastic called Duroplast, was launched in 1957). The Norwegian car was named *Troll*, and was a 2+2 sports coupé with front-wheel drive, direct fuel injection and a planned retail price that could match the *Volkswagen*. The chassis and the 700 ccm motor were bought from the German Gutbrod factory when this went in receivership in 1953. Only five *Troll* cars were completed in the period 1956 to 1958 before the company went bankrupt due to lack of governmental support. According to Kohl-Larsen, he had been met with benevolence when he in 1954 had presented the project to Einar Gerhardsen, who then was president of the Parliament before reassuming the position of Prime Minister in 1955. Initially, the Ministry of Industry was also supportive of the project. But when it later came to actual negotiations and decisions had to be made, Troll only got permission to sell 15 cars in Norway. As the restrictions on the sale and purchase of private cars in Norway were not abolished until 1960, this decision effectively obstructed the Troll project, as potential investors backed out as a result of the government's disinterest and thus hampered the set-up of a production line and an export infrastructure. The reason why the government did not permit larger sale of the car in Norway is said to be that they were afraid that a domestic car production could disrupt a trade agreement with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries that committed Norway to import cars in order to export fish products: Øistein Bertheau, “Troll—egentlig en Gutbrod” in Øistein Bertheau and Christian Stokke (eds.), *Made in Norway? Historien om forsøk på bilproduksjon i Norge* (Oslo: Norsk Teknisk Museum, 1991) p 238-242 and Per Kohl-Larsen interviewed in Helge Stavik, “Trollmannen som ikke fikk sitt eventyr” in *Fædrelandsvennen*, 08.11.1991. Whereas Norwegian cars in plastic materials remained an oddity, Norwegian leisure boats in plastic materials developed into a quite successful industry in the 1950s and 1960s. Despite relatively high prices, Norwegian plastic boat manufacturers soon established a substantial export, mostly due to a reputation for high quality products and good design. Many firms were established in a short time, some went under, but quite a few prospered and survived. Some of the more successful were Skibspplast (est. 1957) and their small sports boats in glass-fibre armed polyester designed by Roald Skibsrud, Bakelittfabrikken's sturdy *Pionér* dinghy in rotational moulded polyethylene designed by Lars Ringdal from 1959 (first years single-hulled, double-hulled from 1968), Kristiansands Mek. Verksted's *With* dinghies in glass-fibre armed polyester from 1959 onwards designed by Bror With and Fjord Plast's sports boat *Fjordling* from 1962 designed by Jan H. Linge (Linge is also the designer of the Olympic class sailboats *Soling* (1965) and *Yngling* (1970) as well as of the Westermoen Båtbyggeri og Mek. Verksted 80-foot *Nasty* class wooden missile torpedo boats (1958/1961), of which 14 (of a total 42 built) were delivered to the US Navy in the early 1960s and deployed in the Vietnam war). For this argument on the Norwegian plastic boat industry, I am indebted to Liv Ramskjær, head of research at The Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology, who is currently investigating this fascinating but little explored part of Norwegian history of technology and design.

surrounded by steep, snow-clad mountains, and a large, wood panelled, traditionalist Oslo villa by Anton Poulsson.⁶⁶ These clichés were only exceeded by the use of illustrations of a viking ship on the Canadian venues in 1957.⁶⁷

The interior chosen to present Norway was of a completely different nature. The furniture consisted of a settee and easy-chair in light, organic forms, bright colours and unconventional construction designed by Torbjørn Afdahl and manufactured by Sandvik & Co., plus a glass table with steel legs designed and executed (prototype) by Cato Mansrud [Figure 10-3].⁶⁸ The intriguing part about this photo is that neither Afdahl nor Sandvik & Co. figure on the catalogue's list of exhibitors, while Mansrud does. In other words: The industrially manufactured settee and easy-chair with their Saarinen-like formal expression were not part of the exhibition, despite them being chosen as representative for Norwegian design in the catalogue introduction. Mansrud's name, on the other hand, was one the list—both as designer and manufacturer.⁶⁹ It is tempting to attribute this fact to an assumption that Sandvik & Co. was a company without the same, tight connections with the applied art community that most of the selected exhibiting manufacturers had.

-
53. Liv Ramskjær, "Users and Producers of Plastics in Post-World War II Norway—Building a New Industry Through Transfer of Technology" in *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society*, Vol. 3, No.1, 2005, p 76-102 and Liv Ramskjær, "Plast i det moderne Norge—Introduksjon, gjennombrudd og spredning av plastprodukter i Norge 1930-1974" in Frode Weium (ed.) *Volund 1999-2000—Plast i det moderne Norge* (Oslo: Norsk teknisk museum, 2001) p 162-180. A comparative account of the design and manufacture of plastic utensils in Sweden can be found in: Thomas Lindblad, *Bruksföremål av plast* (Lund: Signum, 2004)
54. *Bonytt*, No. 8, 1959, p 24
55. See e.g. Åke H. Huld, "The Lunning Prize and Nordic collaboration after World War II" in Lutteman and Uggla (eds.), *op.cit.* p 25
56. Arne Remlov, "'Design in Scandinavia'" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 29-33
57. Per H. Hansen, "Networks, Narratives, and New Markets: The Rise and Decline of Danish Modern Furniture Design, 1930-1970" in *Business History Review*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2006, p 472
58. However, as the British design historian Kevin Davies have demonstrated, the term was first coined in connection with the 1951 London exhibition *Scandinavian Design for Living* held at Heal's department store. This exhibition was the commercial counterpart to the contemporary exhibition *Scandinavia at Table* organized by the British Council of Industrial Design (CoID) the autumn of 1951 at the Tea Centre in London: Kevin Davies, "Marketing Ploy or Democratic Ideal?" in Halén and Wickman (eds.), *op.cit.* p 103
59. Ingeborg Glambek, *Det Nordiske i arkitektur og design—sett utenfra* (Oslo: Arkitektens forlag and Norsk arkitekturforlag, 1997) p 117-135 See also: Ingeborg Glambek, "Scandinavian Design—En kortvarig affære?" in Widar Halén (ed.), *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996) p 74-79
60. Some texts on *Design in Scandinavia*: Gotthard Johansson, "Design in Scandinavia" in Arne Remlov (ed.), *Design in Scandinavia—An exhibition of objects for the home* (Oslo: Kirstes, 1954) p 11-28, Edgar Kaufmann, "Scandinavian Design in the U.S.A." in Krohn-Hansen (ed.), *op.cit.* p 27-42, Astrid Skjerven, "Great Expectations—The foundation of a design concept" in Halén and Wickman (eds.), *op.cit.* p 27-31, Claire Selkurt, "Design for a Democracy—Scandinavian design in Postwar America" in Halén and Wickman (eds.), *op.cit.* p 59-65, and Harri Kalha, "'Just One of Those Things'—The Design in Scandinavia Exhibition 1954-57" in Halén and Wickman (eds.), *op.cit.* p 67-75
61. Torolf Prytz, "Brukskunsts under utstilling" in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 78
62. Arne Remlov, "'Design in Scandinavia'" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 29
63. Remlov (ed.), *op.cit.* p 5
64. Arne Remlov, "'Design in Scandinavia'" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 31
65. *Ibid.* p 29 ("kunsthåndverk, kunstindustri og industrial design")
66. Son of the more famous traditionalist architect Magnus Poulsson. Anton Poulsson's architecture has been described as "typical of the postwar period's "homelike" style": Gunnarsjaa, *op.cit.* p 618 ("typisk for etterkrigstidens "hjemlige" stil")



Figure 10–3: Interior presenting Norway in the *Design in Scandinavia* exhibition catalogue: Settee and easy-chair. Sandvik & Co., ca. 1953. Designer: Torbjørn Afdahl. Table. Designed and executed (prototype) by Cato Mansrud, ca. 1953. (Photo from A. Remlov (ed.), *Design in Scandinavia—An exhibition of objects for the home* (Oslo: Kirstes, 1954))

Whatever the reason, this example illustrates very well the under-representation of industrial design and mass-produced objects in the selection from the Norwegian committee, even considering that the exhibition should include both handicrafts, applied art as well as industrial design. A possible key to understanding this bias is Torolf Prytz' request in connection with the 1953 presentation of the planned exhibition: “[A]ll of our designers and companies [must] exert themselves to bring forward good things... [The exhibition] should and must be an excitant for manufacturers and artists.”⁷⁰ Here, Prytz implies that this exhibition would not be a cavalcade of products easily available to the

67. Kalha, *op.cit.* p 73. This does not by any means mean that the other countries were not presented in a similar manner: The Finnish lakes, the Danish farmland, the Swedish woods, Arne Jacobsen and Alvar Aalto—they were all there.

68. Remlov (ed.), *op.cit.* p 27

69. *Ibid.* p 116-119

70. Torolf Prytz, “Brukskunst under utstilling” in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 78 (“alle våre brukskunstnere og bedrifter [må] anstrenge seg for å komme frem til gode ting... [Utstillingen] bør og må bli en stimulans til produsenter og kunstnere.”)

broader public—i.e. “democratic” industrial design—but rather an elite demonstration intended to showcase objects of supreme artistic quality.⁷¹

Thus, in addition to a large proportion of pure handicraft objects in the selection, even manufacturers who were engaged in industrial serial production were represented by products which were commercially insignificant, but artistically interesting and of attention value to the company. An example might be Hadeland Glassverk, who was represented by art glass objects designed by e.g Hermann Bongard rather than by their mass-produced affordable goods, such as their pressed glass ranges.⁷² But, of course, more prosaic products were also shown, such as Sønnico lamps designed by Birger Dahl and a chair in steel rod and moulded plywood produced by A.s. Norske Industri-artikler and designed by Gjermund Barstad [Figure 10-4].⁷³

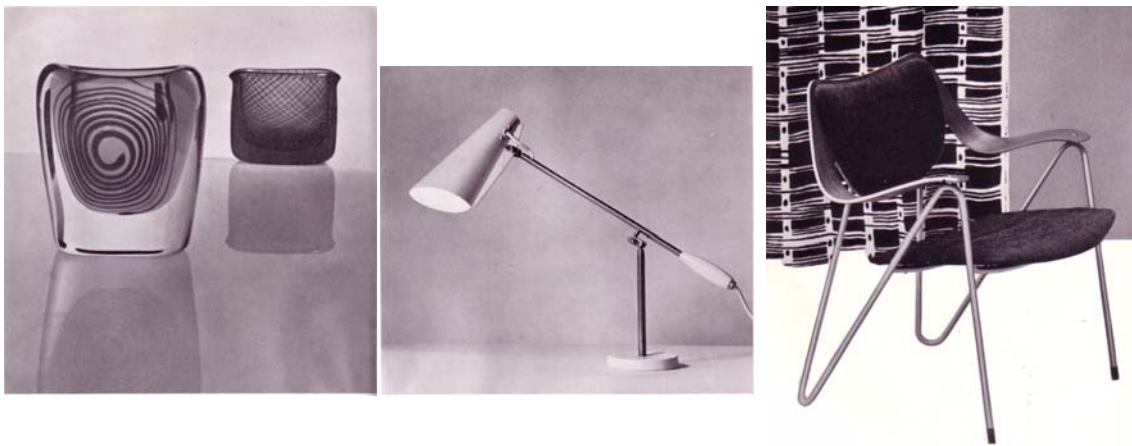


Figure 10–4: Some of the products from Norwegian industrial companies shown at *Design in Scandinavia*: (Left:) Art glass vases: Hadeland Glassverk, ca 1953. Designer: Hermann Bongard. (Middle:) Table lamp. Sønnico, ca 1952. Designer: Birger Dahl. (Right:) Chair (Steel rod and moulded plywood) A.s. Norske Industri-artikler, ca. 1953. Designer: Gjermund Barstad. (Photos from A. Remlov (ed.), *Design in Scandinavia—An exhibition of objects for the home* (Oslo: Kirstes, 1954))

71. This attitude would remain the official policy for most of the manifestations abroad in the 1950s, with a partial exception of the *XI Triennale di Milano* in 1957. The culmination of this policy of elitisation and aestheticisation came with the exhibition *Formes Scandinaves* in Paris in 1958: Denise Hagströmer, “An ‘Experiment’ s’ Indian Summer—The *Formes Scandinaves* Exhibition” in Halén and Wickman (eds.), *op.cit.* p 93-99. Ferdinand Aars claimed in 1959 that the participation at *Formes Scandinaves* and similar events was the principal cause of an increased export of Norwegian manufactured goods: Ferdinand Aars, “Rekk en blomst til norsk brukskunst i dag” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 1-3. The validity of Aars’ argument is questionable due to the generally severely limited production volume of the exhibited objects.

72. The most acclaimed and popular of Hadeland’s pressed glass series was *Siri*, designed by Willy Johansson. Production of *Siri* commenced only in 1955, and this particular product was thus perhaps in any case an unlikely candidate for the exhibition. However, Hadeland had produced pressed glass series long before that: Already in 1930, the highly successful series *Nordlys* designed by Sverre Pettersen entered production at Hadeland’s subsidiary Høvik Verk (production moved to Hadeland in 1933): Inger Helene N. Stemshaug, “Sverre Pettersen—En modernismens industridesigner” in Halén (ed.), *op.cit.* p 32

73. Some other products mentioned earlier in the text were also shown at *Design in Scandinavia*, such as J. Tostrup silver and enamel-ware designed by Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo, the Porsgrund tea service *The fluted one* (*Det riflede*) designed by Tias Eckhoff and the Hiorth & Østlyngen knock-down arm-chair designed by Arne Hiorth.

Before leaving the *Design in Scandinavia* exhibition, one last particularity should be remarked. On the list of exhibiting manufacturers and designers, we find Figgjo Fajanse A/S and Ragnar Grimsrud.⁷⁴ No Figgjo products are portrayed in the catalogue, so it is not known what product(s) the list refers to. Nevertheless, the representation alone indicates that Figgjo now was included in the inner circles of the Norwegian applied art community and accepted as a manufacturer with elite *potential*, at least. Figgjo's neighbour and fierce competitor—Stavangerflint—however, was not represented at *Design in Scandinavia*—something which, if Figgjo's management was so disposed, could be taken as a triumph after Stavangerflint having got the lion's share of the acknowledgement and attention thus far.

Returning to Torolf Prytz' justification of the National Federation's involvement in the project and the consequential derailment from the principal, domestic tasks on the grounds of export promotion, his argument seems rather dubious in elucidation of the selection criteria he and his friends on the committee applied: Among the exhibited products, there were very few that can be said to have had any potential to speak of in terms of industrial export.

While *Design in Scandinavia* and the selection criteria applied by the Norwegian committee illustrate a highly “art-like” ideology, it is important to note that this elitism was not practised nor preached nearly as rigorously on the domestic scene. Here, other tasks and missions were more precarious. Prytz even proclaimed his concern that “[m]any applied artists [*brukskunstnere*] go round strongly emphasizing the word art [*kunst*] in the term designating their occupation.” He then went on stating that “[w]e [the applied art community] need the collaboration with the industry and the craft, perhaps especially the industry.”⁷⁵ Although Prytz' understanding of the term industry probably was narrower than what is common today, this insistence on the growing importance of industrial production of finished goods indicates a slight shift towards the latter part of the craft—industry equilibrium.

But Prytz was far from an industrial romantic. The notion of the designer as the requisite tamer or cultivator of the uncivilized, savage machines still prevails: “The machines are after all severely limited creatures, even when a creative, imaginative mind knows how to exploit them.” He ends his manifesto with an interesting and farsighted petition: “[The industry must] in time allow the leading designers a place in their organization alongside research directors, production managers and sales managers.”⁷⁶ Figgjo Fajanse A/S would be Prytz' ideal company, then, given the fact that they had hired a designer in the dual role of both design manager and general manager as early as 1946.

74. Remlov (ed.), *op.cit.* p 116

75. Torolf Prytz, “Brukskunsts under utstilling” in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 78 (“[e]n rekke brukskunstnere går omkring og legger stor vekt på ordet kunst i sin yrkesbetegnelse... [v]i [brukskunstmiljøet] trenger samarbeidet med industrien og håndverket, kanskje særlig industrien.”)

76. *Ibid.* (“Maskinene er tross alt meget begrensede vesener, selv når en skapende fantasifull hjerne vet å utnytte dem... [Industrien må] efter hvert gi de ledende brukskunstnere plass i sin organisasjon på like fot med forskningsledere, driftsledere og salgsledere.”)

10.4 The revelation in Milan—or: selling art as design

1954 was an important year for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) to legitimize its involvement in projects abroad: As if the participation in *Design in Scandinavia* was not enough, the National Federation organized Norway's debut in the "Design Olympics" at the *X Triennale di Milano* in the summer of 1954. Perhaps this double engagement is why the National Federation's secretary general, Ferdinand Aars, felt the need to repeat the arguments of export promotion recently used by his president, Torolf Prytz: In Aars' words it read that

Large, international design exhibitions give the companies the opportunity of having new models tested and evaluated. The artefacts are reviewed and photographed—if they are good enough. The companies get the possibility to conquer a market which is infinitely much larger than the regular domestic market, and the new models can get a start, a publicity which can hardly be overestimated. The companies in our neighbouring countries know this, and they have also faced the consequences of the experience.⁷⁷

These are the arguments that the National Federation used to convince the government to finance a Norwegian contribution to the *X Triennale*: Just like *Design in Scandinavia* was meant to function as a pierhead into the vast American market, the presence at the *X Triennale* was to open the doors to the lucrative European markets for Norwegian manufacturers. This strategy worked well in political circles, as Aars had managed to win over Foreign Minister Halvard Lange and got the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to finance the exhibition in its totality. The export rhetoric must be understood in light of this. I have already demonstrated the dubiousness of these arguments in connection with the North American campaign based on the selection criteria that were applied—it is thus natural to take a closer look also at the Norwegian contribution to the Milanese event.

Like in the case of *Design in Scandinavia*, the pan-Nordic spirit made its mark on the *X Triennale*. Based on a Swedish initiative, the four participating Nordic countries decided to rent equally large and adjacent exhibition spaces, with a common introductory section.⁷⁸ In his capacity of secretary general of the organizing body—the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst)—Ferdinand Aars functioned as commissioner general for the Norwegian section. In his essay presenting Norway in the exhibition catalogue he is clearly very committed to the task of using the national myths for what they are worth, by way of emphasizing cultural heritage and nature represented by e.g. vikings, fjords, mountains, and stave churches. What is more interesting, especially seen in connection with his above mentioned justification of this event as export promotion, are his reflections on Norway's role in the contemporary international market of consumer goods:

77. Ferdinand Aars, "Hvorfor?" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 145 ("Store internasjonale brukskunstutstillinger gir bedriftene muligheter til å få prøvet og bedømt nye modeller. Gjenstandene får presseomtale og blir fotografert—hvis de er gode nok. Bedriftene får sjanse til å erobre et marked som er uendelig meget større enn det vanlige hjemmemarked, og de nye modellene kan få en start, en publicity, som vanskelig kan vurderes høyt nok. Dette vet bedriftene i våre naboland, og de har også tatt konsekvensene av erfaringen.")

78. Liv Schjødt, "Skandinavia på X Triennale" in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 208-211

We are proud to know that our country enjoys a high standard of living, but this standard of living requires high salaries, which in turn result in high production costs. Our applied art and domestic industries can not be rationalized or industrialized profoundly enough for us to compete quantitatively with the mechanized production of other countries. Our strength will always lie in the individual ability of the artisan-craftsmen, who in their turn always demand the price required by their production costs.⁷⁹

So, the export potential with which Aars (and Prytz) had legitimized the participation in events like the *Triennale di Milano* and *Design in Scandinavia* was clearly not expected to be released within the sphere of industrially manufactured, affordable consumer goods—it was the exclusive, craft-based objects of high artistic quality which were given precedence. And, just like at *Design in Scandinavia*, this attitude was clearly reflected in the selection of exhibited objects.

The bias towards handicrafts, exclusive applied art, one-offs and prototypes was at least as strong as it was at the North American exhibition, and many objects were shown both places. Textiles, silver- and enamelwork, artisan glassware and ceramics dominated the exhibition, along with furniture. Some more industrially oriented products, such as the seemingly omnipresent Sønnico lamps designed by Birger Dahl and a Grosch & Co. electrical kitchen stove were also shown, but did not challenge the overall impression of a highly craft-like character.⁸⁰ A fact which illustrates this even better is that not one single Norwegian product was represented at the thematic exhibitions *Mostra dell' "Industrial Design"* and *Mostra del mobile singolo* (the Triennali consisted of several thematic exhibitions in addition to and independent from the various national exhibitions), which were curated by Italians and dominated by products from countries like Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Great Britain and the USA.⁸¹

The Norwegian exhibition at *X Triennale* was designed by Arne Korsmo, who was the brother-in-law of the president of the organizing body (the National Federation), Torolf Prytz. It is hardly any surprise, then, that products designed by Korsmo and his

79. Ferdinand Aars, "Le arti decorative e industriali in Norvegia" in Ivan Matteo Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *Catalogo della Decima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1954) p 248 ("Noi siamo fieri di sapere che il nostro Paese gode di un alto livello di vita, ma questo livello di vita esige alti salari i quali alla loro volta hanno per conseguenza alti costi di produzione. Le nostre industrie artistiche e domestiche non possono essere razionalizzate o industrializzate così profondamente da permetterci di competere quantitativamente con la produzione meccanizzata di altri Paesi. La nostra forza risiederà sempre nell'abilità individuale degli artigiani quali a loro volta esigeranno sempre il prezzo che i loro costi di produzione richiedono.") It is interesting to note that Aars used the exact same argument, even the same wording, in a booklet on Norwegian design intended for promotion abroad published the previous year by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Ferdinand Aars, *Arts and Crafts—Industrial Design in Norway* (Oslo: The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of Cultural Relations, 1953) p 4

80. The most interesting exception to this line was a series of plastic utensils designed by Ragnar Myhre, John Texmon and Bernhard Witte for Nordisk Formstoff A/S—but the designers were students of exhibition architect Arne Korsmo at SHKS and the products were student projects, and could thus hardly be said to promote commercial industrial design: Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 253-256. A more perspicuous and complete list of Norwegian exhibitors, including prizewinners, can be found in Astrid Skjerven, *Arne Korsmo—Designvirksomhet i etterkrigstiden* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1996) p 133-136

81. Of course, a partial explanation for this fact may be Norway's absence at the previous Triennali and the resulting lack of familiarity with Norwegian design among the Italian curators. Augusto Morello, "Mostra dell' "Industrial Design"" in Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 129-144 and Franco Berlanda, Luigi Fratino and Enrico Freyre, "Mostra del mobile singolo" in Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 91-95

wife Grete (Prytz) Korsmo—especially those designed for Torolf Prytz’ own silversmith company J. Tostrup—was well represented at the exhibition and given a prominent position in Korsmo’s exhibition design [Figure 10-5].



Figure 10-5: Norway’s exhibition at the *X Triennale di Milano* in 1954. The custom-made herring table with accessories designed by Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo is seen in the foreground. Korsmo was awarded a Grand Prix for his exhibition design. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 14, 1954)

For their herring table—the focal point of the exhibition—the craze for custom-made, one-off objects was taken to extremes. Not only did their employer and family business J. Tostrup execute a revolving serving tray in silver and spoons in enamelled silver especially for this occasion—the Korsmo’s even commissioned Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik, with whom they had never collaborated before, to make a set of rectangular plates and cylindric mocha-cups in white china. The cups had rectangular handles, something which Tias Eckhoff—design manager at Porsgrund—criticised harshly because such a handle shape easily sagged during desiccation, causing deformation of the product.⁸² But these plates and cups never were mass-produced—and were probably never even intended to be. A newspaper critic back home strongly criticised Korsmo’s elitist and aestheticist strategy, and asserted that such design, which was “not for use, but for exhibition”, was an irresponsible “excess”.⁸³

82. Skjerven, *op.cit.* p 63-65

Somewhere between these production-hostile aesthetic statements and the more prosaic electrical kitchen stove, we find the contribution from Figgjo Fajanse A/S. Like at *Design in Scandinavia*, a Figgjo product had been selected to represent excellent Norwegian design abroad. The catalogue presented it as “plates in white ceramic with relief decorations”, designed by Ragnar Grimsrud [Figure 10-6].⁸⁴ Although drastically



Figure 10-6: White plate (earthenware) Figgjo Fajanse A/S, ca. 1954. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud.

These white plates were selected to represent Norway at the *X Triennale* di Milano. (The black objects are parts from a later mocha service, also designed by Grimsrud, which was shown at the *XII Triennale* di Milano in 1960). (Photo from Figgjo archive)

more mundane in character than any of the Korsmo designs at the *X Triennale*, these plates must be said to represent a clear, modernist design idiom. However, they were hardly Figgjo’s best-selling nor most typical product at the time. As a curiosity, it might be mentioned that—as opposed to at *Design in Scandinavia*—Figgjo’s neighbour and competitor Stavangerflint A/S was also represented at the *X Triennale*.⁸⁵ And also the

83. O.N., “Brukskunst fra Triennalen i Milano utstilles” in *Arbeideravisa*, 20.04.1955 (“ikke til bruk, men til utstilling... utskielisen”)

84. Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 254 (“Piatti di ceramica bianca con decorazioni in rilievo”)

85. *Ibid.* p 256. The company is here referred to as the ceramics manufacturer “Stafas”, Stavanger, but there is no doubt that it is Stavangerflint A/S. See also: Skjerven, *op.cit.* p 137

Stavangerflint service selected for the Milan exhibition was an experimental product; in fact, it was not intended for the mass market at all.⁸⁶

Despite the attempt to incorporate some products of industrial design and regardless of Aars' rather incomprehensible assertion that they focused on products with "prices that allow the larger public to use high quality products in the everyday life", the Norwegian contribution to the *X Triennale di Milano* is better understood as an example of Korsmo's *Gesamtkunstwerk* or the aesthetic propaganda of the National Federation than as a manifestation of design intended to and capable of promoting Norwegian exports.⁸⁷ But if the true intention rather were to impress the vanguard of the international design community, it may be said to have worked well: The Italian architect and designer Giò Ponti, editor of the renowned architectural magazine *Domus*, described Norway's contribution to the *X Triennale* as "this year's revelation".⁸⁸

At home, the dynastic conditions indicated above, which permeated the Norwegian participation at the *X Triennale*, were criticised in the largest national newspaper, *Aftenposten*, by silversmith Ivar David-Andersen, who understandably was disturbed by what he observed and wondered why his company had not had the opportunity of presenting their collection of enamel work before an exhibition committee:

I have been told that the exhibition committee was not even convened at the selection of objects. I am having a hard time believing this, as it would mean that only exhibition architect Arne Korsmo and secretary general Ferdinand Aars handled the selection. Architect Korsmo had himself designed many of the exhibited objects, and his wife Grete Prytz Korsmo had designed most of the exhibited objects in enamel, secretary general Aars is an official of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art [Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst] where Korsmo's brother-in-law and Grete Prytz Korsmo's brother, goldsmith Torolf Prytz is president, the spouses Korsmo are designers for the company J. Tostrup and Torolf Prytz is partner in the firm. I balk at believing that the gentlemen Korsmo and Aars under these conditions can have deemed themselves duly qualified to judge between the two mentioned competing companies and withdrawing one company's products from the evaluation.⁸⁹

86. N.N., "Den keramiske industri—et speilbilde av smak og behov" in *Iste Mai*, 23.10.1954

87. Ferdinand Aars, "Le arti decorative e industriali in Norvegia" in Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 248 ("prezzi che permettano al grosso pubblico di usare prodotti di qualità nella vita quotidiana")

88. Giò Ponti, "Saluto alla Decima Triennale Augurio alla Undicesima" in *Domus* No. 302, 1955, p 2 ("la rivelazione di quest'anno") In addition to his influential position as editor of *Domus*, Ponti ran a highly productive practice for more than half a decade, working in the fields of architecture, interior design, applied art as well as industrial design. For a survey of Ponit's work as a practicing designer, see: Laura Falconi, *Gio Ponti: Interni, oggetti, disegni. 1920-1976* (Milano: Electra, 2004)

89. Ivar David-Andersen, "Triennalen i Milano" in *Aftenposten Aften*, 06.12.1954 ("Jeg har latt meg fortelle at utstillingskomitéen i det hele tatt ikke var innkalt ved utvalget av gjenstander. Dette har jeg hatt vanskelig for å tro, da det jo i så tilfelle bare var utstillingsarkitekt Arne Korsmo og generalsekretær Aars som hadde med utvalget å gjøre. Arkitekt Korsmo hadde selv tegnet flere av de utstilte ting, hans hustru Grete Prytz Korsmo hadde tegnet de fleste utstilte emaljegjenstander, generalsekretær Aars er funksjonær i Landsforeningen Brukskunst [sic] hvor Korsmo's [sic] svoger og Grete Prytz Korsmo's [sic] bror, gullsmed Torolf Prytz er formann, ektefellene Korsmo er tegnere for firmaet J. Tostrup og Torolf Prytz er medinnehaber av firmaet. Jeg vegrer meg i det lengste for å tro at herrene Korsmo og Aars under disse forhold kan ha funnet seg selv habile til å skifte sol og vind mellom de nevnte to konkurrerende firmaer og unndra den ene bedrifts produkter fra bedømmelsen.")

David-Andersen's wrath may seem a little strange when bearing in mind that his company was well represented among the objects exhibited in Milan—but evidently he would have wanted to have their enamel products selected as well, not merely the silverware. A jury committee *had* been appointed, consisting of the architects Bernt Heiberg and Josef Jervell Grimelund (secretary general of the Norwegian Association of Architects (Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund)) in addition to Aars and Korsmo, but all indications point to Aars and Korsmo being the indisputably dominating actors in the selection process.⁹⁰ David-Andersen's accusations prompted a heated newspaper debate, including a lengthy retort from Aars. This public airing of dirty laundry became such an embarrassing ordeal in the end that the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) at a board meeting on May 25 1955 appointed a committee to investigate the matter. In their statement, this committee—consisting of Johan Fredrik Monrad, Jens von der Lippe and Helen Engelstad—asserted that Prytz

has not taken part in the discussion nor voted at board meetings where it has been decided that his brother-in-law was chosen as exhibition architect. He was absent from the meeting where the exhibition committee was appointed.⁹¹

The investigating committee further “states the fact that the exhibition committee was unable to convene as comprehensively as desired. This was mainly due to summer time.”⁹² Monrad, von der Lippe and Engelstad then concluded their report by criticizing the debaters, including their own secretary general Aars, for inappropriate personal accusations and for unnecessarily bringing bad publicity upon the National Federation.

This semi-official secrecy and camaraderie alluded to by David-Andersen provoked the designer Thorbjørn Rygh as well—despite the fact that a chair of his design manufactured by his father Egil Rygh's furniture company A/S Møbelindustri was exhibited in Milan.⁹³ Thus, it was probably his role as president of the Norwegian Applied Artists' Union (Norsk Brukskunstnerlag) that made him react and demand less perfunctory and random selection criteria and processes.⁹⁴ Nevertheless—this example, alongside those of the *Design in Scandinavia* committee and the 1952 Lunning Prize, shows that the actors involved in these organizations, institutions and events formed highly intricate networks where family, love and friendship were equally relevant factors as professional or organizational ones.

90. The selection process became somewhat of a rush job and took place during the summer of 1954, something which contributed to Heiberg and Jervell Grimelund's low degree of involvement. Jervell Grimelund was, however—according to Aars—present during the selection of the enamel products: Skjerven, *op.cit.* p 55-62

91. Johan Fredrik Monrad, Jens von der Lippe and Helen Engelstad, “Norges deltagelse i den X. Triennale i Milano 1954.” in *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1955, p xxxii (“ikke har deltatt i diskusjonen eller stemt i landsstyremøter hvor det ble besluttet at hans svoger skulle være arkitekt for utstillingen. Han var bortreist i det møte hvor utstillingskomitéen ble oppnevnt.”)

92. *Ibid.* (“konstateres som et faktum at det ikke lykkedes å samle utstillingskomitéen i den utstrekning som ville vært ønskelig. Vesentlig skyldtes dette sommertiden.”)

93. Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 255

94. Jan Romsaas, *Thorbjørn Rygh og hans rolle i bakgrunnen for, og opprettelsen av Industridesignerutdannelsen i Oslo* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 21

The clear bias towards aestheticism at the *X Triennale* was not by any means confined to the Norwegian exhibition. In a thundering speech in *Bonytt*, the Swedish critic Gotthard Johansson castigated the Italian *Triennale* commission for having annihilated the social programme that had distinguished the first postwar manifestation (*VIII Triennale*) in 1948, and characterized the *X Triennale* as “a fashionably perfumed parade of *le dernier cri*”.⁹⁵

Quite a different atmosphere was portrayed when the Swedes themselves in the summer of 1955 organized a large exhibition entitled *H 55* in Hälsingborg. It is perhaps no surprise that *Bonytt* felt more comfortable in Hälsingborg than in Milan. Arne Remlov stated that

the architect's and the designer's social responsibility and their duty to serve the development, is still the prevailing morals... [*H 55*] can serve as a new reminder to our architects, designers, manufacturers—and consumers, based on other international exhibitions, especially the Milan Triennale.⁹⁶

But Ferdinand Aars, who also on this occasion coordinated the Norwegian participation, feared the Swedes were taking their social responsibility too seriously. He accused Swedish design of being overly preoccupied with methods, market surveys, demand- and needs analysis:

Swedish design is about to become science... [T]here is a danger in such a development. The artistic intentions and expressions can disappear in a seemingly complacent, collectivist anonymity.⁹⁷

Aars requested “a little smile in the everyday life” and declared that the aim of applied art was “[t]o generate joy for the human beings”.⁹⁸ It is fascinating to note that his comment fell a mere decade after Arne Remlov had accused Swedish designers of “having... slightly too much fun!”, claiming that “there are, in the year 1945, evident signs of decadence in the Swedish applied art.”⁹⁹ These strongly diverging statements reflect, I believe, more Aars' and Remlov's different attitudes towards design and its role in society than it does any revolutionary development in Swedish design.

95. Gotthard Johansson, “Rene ord om Triennalen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 26 (“en mondent parfymert oppvisning av *le dernier cri*”). Johansson's rebuke stood in stark contrast to the intention and position of the Italian organizers, who regarded the 1954 edition to be particularly concerned with the social vocation of industrial design: Fallan, *op.cit.* p 68 and Ivan Matteo Lombardo, “Proposti e realtà della Decima Triennale” in Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 22-23

96. Arne Remlov, “1930-1955” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 161 (“arkitektens og formgiverens sosiale ansvar og deres plikt til å stille seg i utviklingens tjeneste, fremdeles er gjeldende moral... [*H 55*] kan tjene som en ny påminnelse overfor våre arkitekter, brukskunstnere, produsenter—og konsumenter, sett på bakgrunn av andre internasjonale utstillinger, ikke minst Triennalen i Milano.”)

97. Ferdinand Aars, “Kunstindustri på *H 55*” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 170-172 (“Svensk brukskunst holder på å bli vitenskap... [D]et ligger en fare i en slik utvikling. De kunstneriske intensjoner og uttrykk kan bli borte i en tilsynelatende selvtillfreds, fellespreget anonymitet.”)

98. *Ibid.* p 170 (“et aldri så lite smil i hverdagslivet... [å] skape glede for menneskene.”)

99. Arne Remlov, “Aktiv 100-års jubilent” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 156 (“har det... litt for moro!... det er år 1945 tydelige tegn på dekadanse i svensk brukskunst.”)

In the Norwegian contribution to *H 55*, both these attitudes were represented. The National Federation did not succeed in getting governmental funding for the event, but the silversmith companies David-Andersen and J. Tostrup came to the rescue and picked up the bill.¹⁰⁰ Aars appointed his colleague from the *Bonytt* editorial committee Bernt Heiberg exhibition architect, and the rest of the committee consisted of designer Hermann Bongard, cabinet maker Arne Hiorth and Eva Nordsveen. According to Heiberg, they had chosen not to “document our desire to experiment”.¹⁰¹

The exhibition did include an exclusive, custom-made lobster table—a *X Triennale* follow-up by J. Tostrup and the Korsmo’s, but Heiberg clearly stated that this was “out of bounds” with respect to the rest of the section, and its presence was probably more of a concession to Aars and the sponsoring company J. Tostrup.¹⁰² Both Figgjo Fajanse and Stavangerflint were represented at *H 55*, along with other industrial companies like e.g. Gjøvik Møbelindustri A/S, Norske Industriartikler A/S, Cathrineholm A/S and J. Nielsen A/S. Nevertheless, the more exclusive handicraft was certainly also present, if not dominant, e.g. the studio ceramist couples Marghrete and Jens von der Lippe and Alf and Kari Rongved and the textile artists Elise Jakhelln and Anne-Lise Knudtzon.¹⁰³ This indicates that, despite Aars’ flare for the artistic aspects, the Norwegian contribution to *H 55* was less of a demonstration of purely artistic qualities than the Milan manifestation had been.¹⁰⁴ Still, it can hardly be described as a radical display of industrial design.

10.5 Returning to Milan—or: selling design as science

Unlike for the *X Triennale* in 1954, no governmental funding could be allocated for a Norwegian participation at the *XI Triennale* in 1957, and the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) waived the task of organizing the job—allegedly also because they were busy preparing for the 1958 *Formes Scandinaves* exhibition in France.¹⁰⁵ So, while Sweden, Denmark and Finland also this

100. Skjerven, *op.cit.* p 78. In addition to the exhibition that materialized, Norway had—alongside Denmark, Finland, England, France, Switzerland, West Germany, Japan and USA—been invited to exhibit a fully equipped modern apartment interior for a young family with children at H55, but declined due to insufficient funding: Kerstin Wickman, “Constructing and Reconstructing a Design Identity” in Pekka Korvenmaa and Krista Kodres (eds.), *Connecting: A Conference on the Multivocality of Design History & Design Studies* [ICDHS 5th conference proceedings] (Helsinki & Tallinn: University of Art and Design Helsinki & Estonian Academy of Arts, 2006) p 7

101. Bernt Heiberg, “Spredte inntrykk og samlede erfaringer” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 165 (“demonstrere vår eksperimentlyst.”)

102. *Ibid.* (“ut av rammen.”)

103. Frank Frankland, Arthur Hald, Gotthard Johansson and Bo Gunnar Lindgren (eds.), *H55 Utställning i Hälsingborg 1955* (Hälsingborg: Hälsingborg Stad—Svenska Slöjdföreningen, 1955/1957) p 103

104. This impression is due more to the selection of exhibited products than the exhibition design—Heiberg’s exhibition design must be said to represent the same aestheticism as Korsmo’s Milan project, and went even further in the decontextualization and defamiliarization of the products, displaying them in splendid isolation created by a rigidly grid-shaped system of steel and glass shelves. A photo of the Norwegian section can be found in: Sven Silow, “H55—med ansiktet vänt mot framtiden” in Kerstin Wickman (ed.), *Formens rörelse—svensk form genom 150 år* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1995) p 187

time were represented by their applied art associations, the Norwegian contribution came about in a rather unconventional manner—something that would cause somewhat of a row.¹⁰⁶

As a consequence of the lacking governmental funding and the National Federation's waiver, the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)), established in 1955,¹⁰⁷ assumed the responsibility of organizing a Norwegian contribution. They appointed a committee headed Bjørn Engø (who also designed the exhibition) and completed by Birger Dahl, Tore Hjertholm and Thorbjørn Rygh. The exhibition was fully financed by the companies who participated, and these were, not surprisingly, companies who collaborated with members of ID-gruppen. Due to this model of funding and that the contribution did not have status as an official Norwegian manifestation, ID-gruppen felt free to disregard any notion of the exhibition as a representation of Norwegian design as a whole [Figure 10-7].

Thus, virtually all the exhibited products were designed by members of ID-gruppen, and manufactured by the sponsoring companies. Bjørn Engø's own designs were generously represented: his name appears 19 places in the catalogue, especially in connection with Emalox anodized aluminium products (awarded silver medal) and Arnold Wiigs Fabrikker lamps. Committee member and president of ID-gruppen Thorbjørn Rygh was also handsomely represented, so were other prominent members such as Tias Eckhoff and Karl E. Korseth.

Among the exhibited products were some rather prosaic and “inartistic” objects like a Trestandard A/S kitchen designed by Steinar Thomassen, complete with an Emaljeverket A/S washing machine, a Arne Gaarud A/S stove, an Evalet refrigerator, an Eno A/S water heater (awarded gold medal) designed by Rygh. Outside the kitchen, the less “artsy” products included two Jørgen S. Lien cash registers designed by Ralph Lysell and a calculating machine of the same make, a Trio Fabrikker aluminium door handle (awarded gold medal) designed by Tias Eckhoff and Trio Fabrikker door-lock and handles (awarded gold medal) designed by Bjørn A. Larsen. Products more conformable to the conventional applied art tradition were of course also shown, such as e.g. Porsgrund china (awarded gold medal) designed by Eckhoff and Konrad Galaaen and various furniture and utensils.¹⁰⁸ ID-gruppen even found room for handicraft objects,

105. This argument seems somewhat strange when considering that the National Federation, in the occasion of the upcoming 1958 world expo in Brussels were informed by the general committee for the Norwegian contribution that all exhibition material would be subordinated to “a strict architectural composition” in the pavilion designed by Sverre Fehn, and thus “very much limit[ing] the selection and allow[ing] for little display”, declared that “We deplore the fact that the Norwegian general committee have not found more room for applied art”, and claimed that “In the absence of our neighbouring countries, Norwegian applied art would here have had a unique opportunity to manifest itself.” So, at least at the outset of 1958, the National Federation clearly did *not* feel swamped by the preparation for *Formes Scandinaves*—although the situation might have been different a year earlier. Ferdinand Aars, “Verdensutstillingen i Brüssel 1958” in *Bonytt*, No. 1, 1958, p 28 (“en streng arkitektonisk komposisjon... i høy grad begrenser utvalget og gir små utfoldelsesmuligheter... Vi beklager at den norske hovedkomité ikke har funnet grunn til å gi brukskunsten en bredere plass i bildet... I våre nabolands fravær ville norsk brukskunst her hatt en enestående sjanse til å gjøre seg gjeldene.”)

106. N.N., “Skandinavia på XI Triennale” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 246-249

107. ID-gruppen will be discussed further in the next chapter.

108. No products from Figgjo or Stavangerflint was represented, something which is obviously a consequence of these companies' and their designers' lack of contact with ID-gruppen

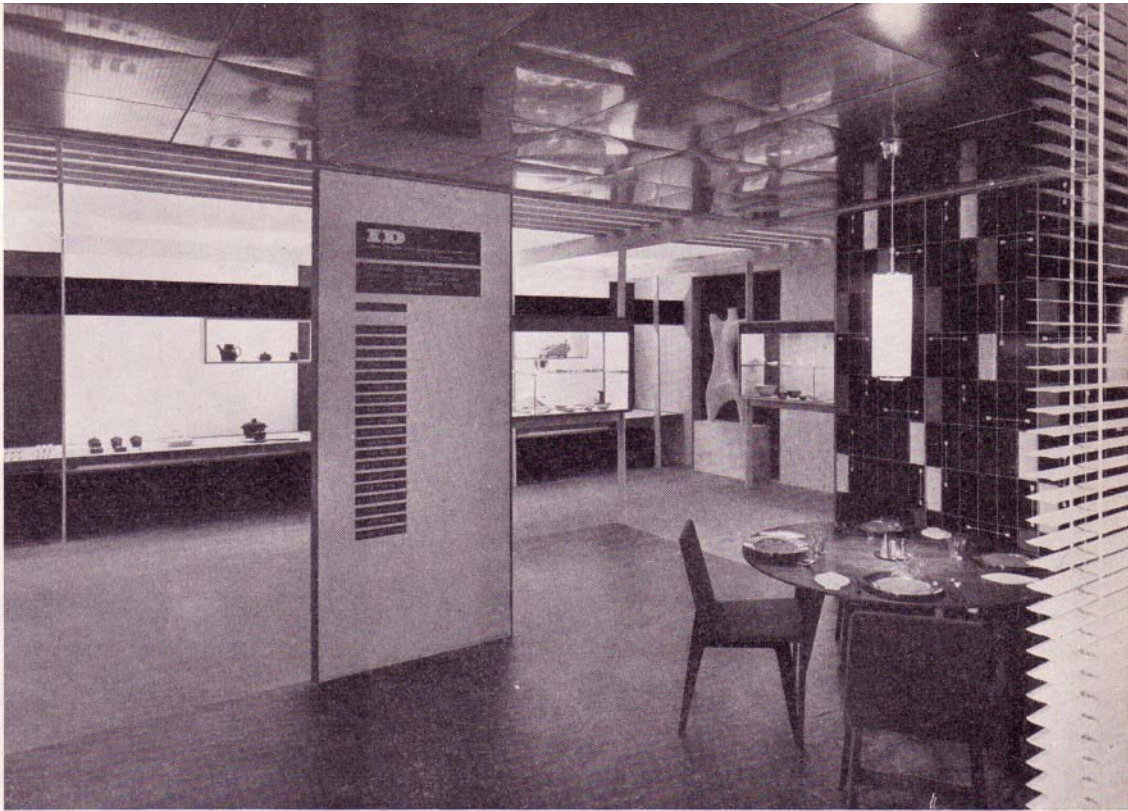


Figure 10–7: The so-called *Sector B*) of the Norwegian section at the *XI Triennale di Milano* in 1957, organized by ID-gruppen. Exhibition design: Bjørn Engø. The dining alcove (front, right) contains a round Gunnar Bergersen teak table designed by Bjørn Engø, Egil Rygh A/S Møbelindustri chairs designed by Thorbjørn Rygh, an Arnold Wiigs Fabrikker pendant lamp designed by Bjørn Engø. The wall behind the table is covered with Plasticpanel A/S modular plastic panels designed by Bjørn Engø. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 17, 1957)

e.g. by Arne Lindaas and Ivo Pannaggi, as well as fine art in the form of sculptures by Pannaggi and Aase Texmon Rygh (Thorbjørn Rygh's wife).¹⁰⁹

As ID-gruppen's preparations for the exhibitions unfolded, another, separate—and to ID-gruppen allegedly unknown—initiative was taken. Central forces in the applied art movement and actors who had been highly involved in the official Norwegian participation at the *X Triennale* in 1954 decided to take matters in their own hands. The manufacturers J. Tostrup and Hadeland Glassverk, epitomized by designers Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo were not prepared to stay at home after all the praise they had received in Milan in 1954. The governmental funding might have vanished, but the Korsmo's had joined forces with two new and disparate actors: the National Institute of Industrial Research (Sentralinstituttet for industriell forskning) and Cathrineholm A/S.¹¹⁰

A collaboration between a silversmith company and the National Institute for Industrial Research may seem surprising. But the explanation is close at hand. When J. Tostrup after World War II began manufacturing objects in enamelled silver designed by

109. Einar Nielssen, "Norvegia" in Ivan Matteo Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *Catalogo della Undecima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1957) p 232-234

Grete Prytz Korsmo, they imported the enamel from Britain, France, Germany and Switzerland. At a family dinner sometime in the early 1950s, Grete Prytz Korsmo complained about the high prices, varying availability and inferior quality of the imported enamel. At the same dinner table sat her brother-in-law, who worked at the National Institute of Industrial Research, and he suggested that they might be able to solve the problem. J. Tostrup agreed to pay the considerable costs, and the Institute managed to develop an enamel with much better qualities, and Hadeland Glassverk assumed the task of producing it.¹¹¹

Cathrineholm A/S had been established in Halden in 1830 as an iron mill, and started manufacturing basic utensils such as pots, jugs and washbowls in opaque enamelled steel.¹¹² In the first half of the 1950s, the company was undergoing a modernization, and wanted to expand its product assortment. The great laudation and attention received by the J. Tostrup enamelled silverware at the X Triennale in 1954 made Cathrineholm contact J. Tostrup and consequently the Korsmo's with a view to begin a collaboration. Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo designed a wide range of tableware and utensils for Cathrineholm, using the new enamels developed by the National Institute of Industrial Research—both opaque and transparent. The new Cathrineholm products in steel represented a vastly different production volume, manufacturing method and price range than J. Tostrup's silver, something which meant increased enamel production volume and lowered costs for Hadeland, as well as higher turnover for J. Tostrup who resold the enamel to Cathrineholm. A true win-win situation.¹¹³

It was this new and intriguing actor network which instigated this exhibition, which chiefly consisted of J. Tostrup enamelled silver products (awarded gold medal), Cathrineholm enamelled steel products (awarded gold medal) and the National Institute of Industrial Research's presentation of the new enamel technology. In addition, Hadeland got to show some art glass products (awarded gold medal), predominantly designed by Willy Johansson, and Korsmo also included a painting and a sculpture by his artist friend Gunnar S. Gundersen.¹¹⁴

Despite the indisputable fact that ID-gruppen's exhibition was by far the bigger of the two both in terms of floorage, participating partners and exhibited products, the *XI Triennale* catalogue presented these two separate contributions as two equal "sectors". These were referred to as "A) Sector of the 'National Institute of Industrial Research'" and "B) Sector of the 'Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers'".¹¹⁵ This wording, and the attribution of *Sector A*) to the National Institute for Industrial Research rather than to

110. In the end, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (Utenriksdepartementets Kontor for kulturelt samkvem med utlandet) granted a governmental contribution of NOK 10.000,- as a result of an application from the director of the National Institute for Industrial Research (Sentralinstituttet for industriell forskning). Nevertheless, the money was divided equally between the two exhibiting groups: Arne Korsmo and Grete Prytz Korsmo, "La Boutique Estetique [sic] et Technique [sic]" in Thorvald Krohn-Hansen (ed.), *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1957* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1958) p 87

111. Grete Prytz Korsmo (now Kittelsen) in conversation with the author 03.02.2005

112. Skjerven, *op.cit.* p 88

113. Grete Prytz Korsmo, "En kort fortelling om arbeidet med emalje fra årene etter 2den verdenskrig til den XI Triennale utstilling i Milano" in Krohn-Hansen (ed.), *op.cit.* p 89-92

114. *Nielsen*, *op.cit.* p 231-232

the manufacturers and designers who in reality organized that contribution suggests that the Norwegian section (comprised of sectors A) and B)) was heavily oriented towards industry, technology and science.

Although this suggestion was far more appropriate in 1957 than what it would have been of Korsmo's *Gesamtkunstwerk* which had dominated in 1954, it was not entirely suitable for the *XI Triennale* either. A symptom might be seen in that neither this time was any Norwegian product represented at the *Mostra Internazionale dell' "Industrial Design"*¹¹⁶ But much due to the fact that Korsmo's scope this time was much more limited and that the more mundane Cathrineholm products played a central role in *Sector A*), and that ID-gruppen had taken over the role as dominating premise provider through their *Sector B*), the Norwegian contribution to the *XI Triennale* had moved the focus towards industrial design with respect to the *X Triennale*.¹¹⁷

While Norway's exhibition thus had gone from an elitist art performance in 1954 to a far more social/popular display of industrial design three years later, the perceived direction taken by the *Triennale di Milano* as a whole was severely criticised by a group of Italian architects. The Movimento Studi d'Architettura (MSA), under the presidency of Giancarlo De Carlo, decided in April 1956 to boycott the *XI Triennale* partly because the *Triennale* in their opinion had turned away from the social vocations MSA regarded as fundamental to the organization.¹¹⁸ A few prominent figures of the MSA, like Ettore Sottsass and Marco Zanuso, did not share these views, and left the group in order to continue working with the *Triennale*. MSA's rebellion was, however, of limited duration and scope. In October 1957, toward the end of the *XI Triennale*, the MSA accepted the *Triennale* committee's invitation to a conference where the dispute was settled.¹¹⁹

The *XI Triennale* caused reactions in Norway as well, although of a very different nature. As mentioned above, these were connected to the unorthodox organization of the Norwegian contribution. When ID-gruppen discovered that the Korsmo's were preparing their own little exhibition in collaboration with J. Tostrup, Hadeland and Cathrineholm, they felt betrayed, because both Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo had in 1956 been invited and accepted membership of ID-gruppen and would thus know of the group's plans. They did, however, not inform ID-gruppen of their own arrangements.

The Korsmo's being *invited* members, and Arne Korsmo's role as former teacher for the majority of ID-gruppen's members suggests that the Korsmo's membership meant more to ID-gruppen than vice versa. Also, Arne Korsmo moved to Trondheim assuming a professorship in architectural design at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges

115. *Ibid.* p 231-234 ("A) Settore dell' 'Istituto per Ricerche Industriali' ... B) Settore del 'Norsk Gruppe for industriell Formgiving'")

116. Gillo Dorfles, Alberto Rosselli, Marco Zanuso, *et al.* (eds.), "Mostra Internazionale dell' 'Industrial Design'" in Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 133-145

117. This shift of focus towards industrial design could be seen in the exhibitions of several other countries too, perhaps most clearly in the West German section: Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) p 188-189

118. The protagonists of the MSA were Ludovico Belgioioso, Enrico Peressutti and Ernesto N. Rogers of the architectural firm Studio BPR: Alfonso Grassi and Anty Pansera, *L'Italia del design—Trent'anni di dibattito* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1986) p 16

119. Fallan, *op.cit.* p 98-99

tekniske høgskole) in 1956, and was never much involved in ID-gruppen.¹²⁰ ID-gruppen, and especially president Rygh considered Korsmo's behaviour highly disloyal, and spent most of the autumn of 1957 debating whether or not to expel him. Grete Prytz Korsmo was summoned to several meetings where she declared that they had not deliberately withheld information about their arrangements.¹²¹

What became of the expulsion case is uncertain, but ID-gruppen's treasurer kept sending reminders and repeated applications regarding Korsmo's membership fee for several years to come—something which suggests that he was not expelled.¹²² Another indication of the imbalance or disalignment of this dispute is that Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo in an article reporting on their experiences with the *XI Triennale di Milano* mention the sector organized by ID-gruppen without any evident grudge, and even emphasize their own membership in the group.¹²³

10.6 Conclusion

The world became smaller for the Norwegian design community in the 1950s. A series of initiatives and events contributed to, or at least aimed at, internationalising the Norwegian design discourse. This chapter has analysed some of the major initiatives and events through which foreign design and ideas were brought to Norway and, more thoroughly, those through which Norwegian design was promoted abroad.

The chapter began with a brief account of some of the very first exhibitions of Norwegian design abroad after the war, held in Manchester, London and Chicago during the early 1950s. These were all fairly modest in scope, and despite reports of them being well received among public and press, there is little to indicate that they achieved much in terms of boosting neither professional interest, general public acclaim and export sales. The exhibition *Norwegian Applied Art 1951 (Norsk Brukskunst 1951)* shown in Gothenburg and Copenhagen was examined in more detail, due to it being a more comprehensive event and because it was the Norwegian design community's official "coming out party" designed to show our neighbours the advances Norwegian design had made since the war.

The mid-section of this chapter explored the ambivalent attitudes towards the USA in Norway and the Norwegian design community. This uneasiness and ambivalence cut through Norwegian society as a whole, and pertained both to the USA's role in international politics, its large-scale industry, its wide-spread consumerism, its far-

120. In this connection it is interesting to note that after his relocation to Trondheim, Korsmo assumed the chairmanship of the Trondheim Applied Art Association (Trondheim Brukskunstforening), the local chapter of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—LNB), although for a brief period (1957-1958): *Bonytt*, No. 1, 1957, p xxiv

121. Minutes from ID-gruppen's meetings autumn 1957. NID archive

122. Letters from ID-gruppen, signed "forretningsfører" ("treasurer") addressed to Arne Korsmo dated to 1958, 1959 and 1960. NID archive. According to Jan Romsaas, Thorbjørn Rygh now claims that Korsmo was expelled, but makes no further specifications: Romsaas, *op.cit.* p 28, n 37

123. Korsmo and Prytz Korsmo, *op.cit.* p 117

reaching general popular culture, as well as its heterogeneous design culture. When it came to design, to those primarily concerned with its cultural aspects as well as to those more concerned with its commercial side, America represented both fears and desires.

The latter part of this chapter was devoted to an analysis of the Norwegian contributions to the *X* and *XI Triennale di Milano*. At the former, taking place in 1954, the applied art community staged a show that took on the character of a *Gesamtkunstwerk* while the rhetoric surrounding it was saturated with references to everyday objects as the core concern of the exhibit and export potential as its primary justification. Whereas this first “revelation” in Milan thus tried to sell art as design, the 1957 contribution was dominated by the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) and their attempt at selling design as science.

The different instances of international mediation analysed in this chapter represent perhaps the most formal and explicit kind of translation work carried out in the Norwegian design community in this period. The next chapter will continue investigating the negotiation of design networks and other types of translation work in the 1950s, but will focus on internal discussions about professional debate and demarcations and definitions of the design field.

11 Factory forms:

Articulating the characteristics of industrial design

11.1 Introduction

With the 1950s' advance of modern industry and a budding consumer society, the Norwegian design community matured considerably in their approach to the role of design in commercial industry and market economy. This chapter will examine the debate on the role of design under these new circumstances, focusing chiefly on the discussions about the special requirements and conditions of design in commercial industry. To what degree could compromise be acceptable in the effort to gain a broader footing for design in commercial manufacturing industry? What was it that distinguished industrial design from other kinds of design or the broader design field in general? What level of disciplinary/professional specialisation and autonomy should industrial design have?

The chapter starts out with an inquiry into the new awareness and (partial) acceptance of how design for industrial mass-production in a market economy necessarily entailed a certain degree of compromise and pragmatism. The old notion of the designer as a heroic figure coming to industry's rescue by bringing artistic qualities to industrial products would still resurface from time to time, but it was now being challenged by voices calling for a more integrated and cooperative design model, where designers had to both give and take in order to create viable solutions. The concern for the realities of industrial mass-production was also the prime mover for the foundation of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in 1955. This event might be said to inaugurate a fragmentation process that would run for the next two decades, in which the holistic and universal outlook on design that characterised the applied art community would disintegrate and be replaced by more specialised design fields—such as handicraft and industrial design, on each side of the spectre.

This fragmentation did not happen over night; it would turn out to be a slow, gradual and protracted process. The fringe groups were not revolutionaries, they were reformists. Constructing a new, separate identity took time, and in the 1950s both wings seemed to be rather comfortable participating in the wider applied art community. But as the more progressive forces grew increasingly insistent about minding the gap, the established applied art community went to ever greater lengths in their efforts at bridging the gap.

This chapter also makes an excursion into the distinctive power of the modernist aesthetic. The 1950s saw a great surge in the popularity of modern design. But as clean, unadorned shapes became the choice of every second housewife, modern design had to be refined in order to retain or regain room for distinction. On the other hand, there were also voices expressing concern for a recent tendency of over-refinement bordering on expressionism in modern design, calling instead for more subdued, less obtrusive forms.

The objects of our daily environment should not over-expose themselves, something that became more and more important with the increasing impact of mass-produced and mass-marketed products. As an antidote both to the age-old problem of excessive adornment as well as this new tendencies of over-elaboration in modern design, there seems to have been an interest in promoting the unaffected.

11.2 Making room for compromise and pragmatism

In the fall of 1955, *Bonytt* dedicated an entire issue to the topic of tableware, and invited several designers working in this sector to write articles on the subject from their own point of view. The Swedish designer, artist, scenographer and teacher Sven Erik Skawonius wrote the introduction, where he stressed the quotidian aspects of tableware design. Modern dinner services should be adapted to the everyday meals, working-class economy, and to the needs of the modern housekeeper. For instance, the traditional, complete 12-person dinner service was to be abandoned in favour of more flexible compositions and multi-purpose vessels. He also made it clear that when designing for the masses, the designer and the industry “must be in a reciprocal relation to the market.”¹

Porsgrund Porselänsfabrik’s design manager Tias Eckhoff was called upon to lecture on the different ceramic materials, their properties and fields of utilisation. However, Eckhoff was no engineer, chemist or technician, but a progressive modernist designer, and could not resist plunging into moral-aesthetic concerns as well. Although he considered that simple, rational forms had largely been accepted and implemented within the sphere of domestic utensils, his fellow modernist missionaries could not rest quite yet:

Today, it would (hopefully) seem utterly ridiculous to all if we got aluminium casseroles with floral decor, refrigerators with painted winter landscapes and sinks decorated with goldfish and starfish. The hard hand of functionalism has by and large cleaned the field. But still there exists a protected area where the surplus of decoration has, for good and evil, unlimited leeway. Pottery, earthenware and porcelain have long had a prescriptive right to serve as much as adornment as for use. But in our time one can often get the impression that all the decoration which formerly was distributed rather evenly on all objects in the house now must be placed on the service. It is therefore no wonder that it now and again gets quite crowded for the food... The most important decoration on the service is the food, and all other decoration should keep becomingly to the background. We have also learned to evaluate and appreciate the aesthetic value of the materials themselves—the white, hard, translucent porcelain, the cheerful colours of the earthenware and the charming, rustic material character of pottery.²

Even though Eckhoff in his own work strictly avoided figurative decor, his text was illustrated with both an old, traditional porcelain service from Royal Copenhagen with

1. Sven Erik Skawonius, “Om spisestell” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 182 (“måste stå i ett reciprokt förhållande till marknaden.”)

hand painted straw pattern decor as well as a contemporary earthenware service from Rörstrand adorned with conventionalized flowers. Hence, it appears he appealed for temperance rather than abstinence.³ Still, the embedded moral issues are imminent: “The products which are best for the consumer are often hard to find in a stoneware store. They “drown” among all the glaring things which attract the eyes.”⁴ This is clear-cut protestant ethics in design terms: “...lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Forgive us, for we know not what we do...”

For the same *Bonytt* special issue, Ragnar Grimsrud was, probably much due to his uncommon dual role as both design manager and general manager at Figgjo Fajanse A/S, invited to write about services and tableware design from the manufacturer’s point of view. With nearly 30 years experience as a ceramist and designer, and a decade as factory manager, he was certainly eligible for the task. But despite his affiliation with the applied art movement since the *National Exhibition in Bergen (Landsutstillingen i Bergen)* in 1928, he had never taken part in the public debate. Now, he was called upon by *Bonytt* as a business representative with “respect for the artistic demands one must pose to the production of services.”⁵ Hardly typical of the leaders of Norwegian manufactured goods industry, he was more *Bonytt*’s ideal leader in that he embodied the union of artistic, technical and mercantile know-how.

Grimsrud’s article demonstrates clearly that the financial responsibility affiliated with his role as business manager had made its mark. Though he certainly shared the general aesthetic-ethic aspects of the modernist idiom, his arguments are thoroughly coloured by the prominence of market comprehension and manufacturability.⁶ The most important aspects in the development and design of a new service were, according to the Figgjo manager, that it must:

1. be of current interest, new, but there must also be a market for it—immediately and over

-
2. Tias Eckhoff, “Keramiske materialer i husholdningen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 184 (“Idag ville det (forhåpentligvis) virke fullstendig komisk på alle om vi fikk aluminiumskasseroller med blomsterdekorasjoner, kjøleskap med malte vinterlandskap og oppvaskkummer dekorert med gullfisk og sjøstjerner. Funksjonalismens hårde hånd har stort sett feid rent bord. Men ennå finnes det et fredet område hvor dekorasjonens overskudd på godt og ondt had fritt spillerom. Lertøyet, fajansen og porselenet har gammel hevd på å tjene like meget til pryd som til nytte. Men i våre dager kan man ofte få det inntrykk at all den dekorasjon som før var fordelt nokså jevnt på alle ting i huset nå skal plasseres på spise-stellet. Det er derfor ikke rart at det i enkelte tilfelle kan bli litt trangt om plassen for maten... Den viktigste dekorasjon på seviset er maten og all annen dekorasjon bør holde seg flatterende i bakgrunnen. Vi har også lært å vurdere og sette pris på skjønnhetsverdien i selve materialene—det hvite, hårde porselenet som lyset skinner igjennom, fajansens friske farver og lergodsets sjarmerende rustikke materialer karakter.”)
 3. Eckhoff later made these attitudes explicit: In a 1967 interview on the role of decor in porcelain production, he was asked if he was an opponent to decor in principle. He answered promptly: “No, absolutely not. If form and decor are in harmony, and the decor enriches the service, it is appropriate.” Still, he felt compelled to warn against the potential dangers of excessive and glaring decor by asking rhetorically: “What do You think of stew on red roses?” When asked to point out “a really good pattern”, he chose the traditional hand painted blue straw pattern decor: “This pattern is simple and clearly constructed while at the same time surprisingly varied and rich of detail.” He then even professed that “The discreet, anaemic decor [which] reigned in the fifties... has resulted in many anonymous and boring homes.”: Tias Eckhoff interviewed in Ragnhild Bjelke, “Vurder ikke dekoren isolert” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 212-213 (“Nei, absolutt ikke. Dersom form og dekor er samstemt, og dekoren beriker seviset, er den på sin plass... Hva synes De om lapskaus på røde roser?... Dette mønsteret er enkelt og klart bygget opp samtidig som det er overraskende rikt på detaljer... Den diskret, anemiske dekor [som] hersket i femti-årene... har resultert i mange anonyme og kjedelige hjem.”)

- years,
2. have a correct price,
 3. be importunate in the display window,
 4. not be importunate in the home, but have a high utilitarian quality, be functionally correct in all its parts and in addition space-saving in the cupboard,
 5. be adjusted to the factory's technological standard. No part should have any extra degree of difficulty.
 6. be possible to distribute its manufacture correctly among the factory's departments,
 7. produce acceptable revenue in all stages of production with low percentage of faulty goods,
 8. be flexible in packing, shipment and stock holding.⁷

Clearly, the majority of these points demonstrates concerns which in the applied art community were largely ignored, downgraded or frowned upon. Aspects related to market adjustment, marketing and commercialism (as expressed in points 1 through 3) were still rather taboo, or simply not interesting—at least to the more idealist fractions of the community, who had little or no contact with the fiscal realities of mass-production and commercial business management. Despite the common romanticism regarding manufacturability, which often took on a very abstract and lofty character, Grimsrud's highly pedestrian and realistic account of the logistics and economics of factory production (points 5 through 8) represented a quite different level of pragmatism and prudence. The only point on his list which clearly falls in line with the habitual jargon of the applied art community and the *Bonytt* discourse is the focus on austere formal expressions, usability and functionality expressed in point 4.

But despite the sobriety and pragmatism acquired through his financial responsibilities, Grimsrud unmistakably professed the gospel of modernist design. It was just that he had learned that change would come through reformation, not through revolution:

The factory's response to these new demands may be tardy and slow. It is dependent on the tendencies having penetrated, reached out to a somewhat broader public. But the interest in underglaze effects, in good design and interesting material and colour effects is

-
4. Tias Eckhoff, "Keramiske materialer i husholdningen" in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 185 ("De varer som forbrukeren er best tjent med er det ofte vanskelig å finne frem til i en stentøyforretning. De "drukner" blant alt det glorete som trekker øynene til seg.")
 5. Editorial introduction to Ragnar Grimsrud, "Produsenten har ordet" in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 186 ("respekt for de kunstneriske krav man skal stille til produksjonen av spisestell.")
 6. Although Eckhoff's financial responsibilities were less comprehensive than Grimsrud's, even Eckhoff later stated that "we who have permanent positions at large companies quickly become realists. Not even the world's most famous porcelain factories can live by the elite production shown at ceremonious occasions alone.": Tias Eckhoff interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, "Fem profiler på Porsgrund i Porsgrunn" in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 65 ("vi som er fast knyttet til store foretak blir snart realister. Ikke en gang de mest verdenskjente porselensfabrikker kan leve av den topp-produksjon som vises frem ved høytidelige anledninger.")
 7. Ragnar Grimsrud, "Produsenten har ordet" in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 186-187 ("1. være aktuelt, nytt, men det skal også være marked for det—straks og gjennom år, 2. ha riktig pris, 3. være påtrengende i utstillingsvinduet, 4. ikke være påtrengende i hjemmet, men ha en høy brukskvalitet, være funksjonelt riktig i alle sine deler og dertil plassøkonomisk i skapet, 5. ligge til rette for fabrikkens tekniske standard. Ingen del bør ha ekstra vanskelighetsgrad. 6. kunne arbeidsfordeles riktig mellom fabrikkens avdeliger, 7. gi forsvarlig resultat i alle produksjonstrinn med lav prosent for feilvarer, 8. være smidig for pakking, forsendelse og lagerhold.")

catching on. Gold decor and floral tracing decors will have a hard time reconciling with the new environment. White and one-coloured things in bright, blonde colours who do not compete with the food offer great opportunities... We will see the good form again, freed from camouflage.⁸

He explained his aesthetic preferences by stating that “[t]ableware is to the highest degree utility articles” and their design must therefore “above all... be solved functionally”.⁹ To elucidate this design ideology, the article is illustrated by the latest product by Figgjo and Grimsrud: the service *Sissel* [Figure 11-1]. This service conformed both to Grimsrud’s

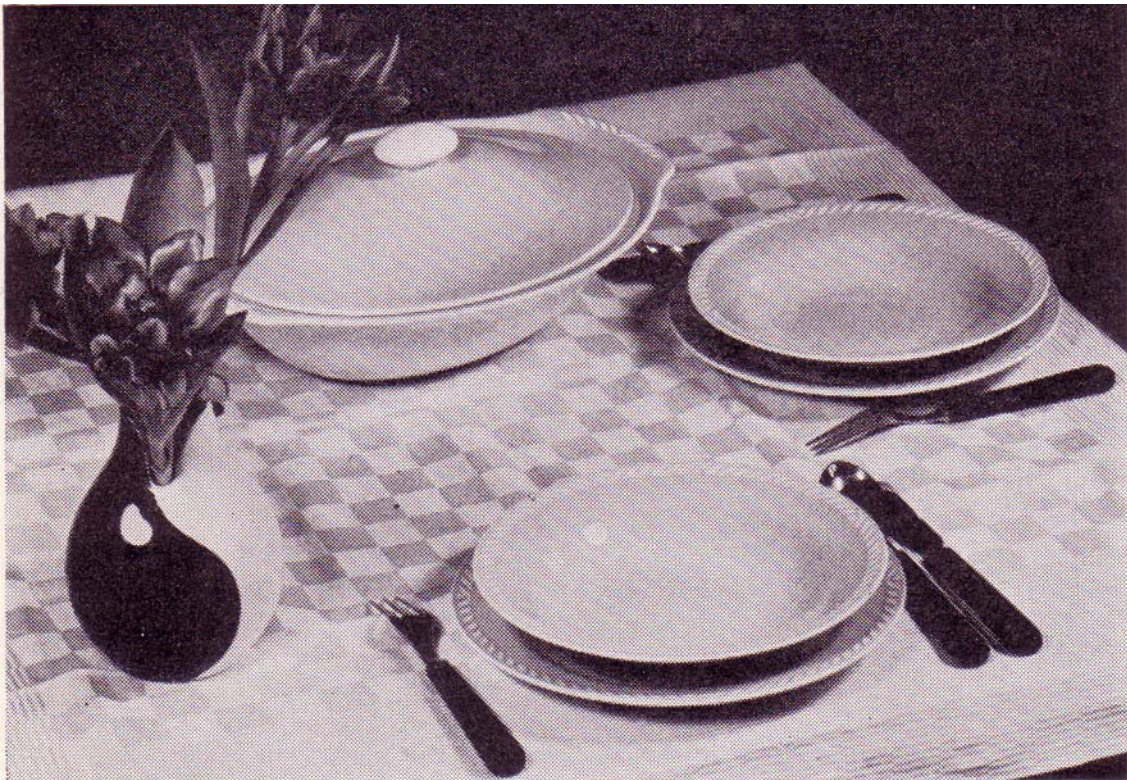


Figure 11–1: Ragnar Grimsrud’s latest pride and joy, as presented in *Bonytt*: Parts from service *Sissel* (earthenware) Figgjo Fajanse A/S, 1954. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. The black and white vase to the left is a Figgjo prototype in bone china. It is interesting to note that Figgjo experimented with this material in the mid fifties, even though it was never put in commercial production, because no Norwegian manufacturers used bone china (Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik used felspar porcelain—the only manufacturer of bone china in Scandinavia was the Swedish company Gustavsberg). Ivar Stranger has dated this vase and the bone china experiments to ca 1959, but this picture reveals that they had at least started as early as 1955.^a (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 15, 1955)

a. Ivar Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland kunstnersenter, 1991) p 37

8. *Ibid.* (“Fabrikkens reaksjon på disse nye krav er kanskje treg og langsom. Den er avhengig av at tendensene er trengt gjennom, ut til et noe større publikum. Men interessen for underglasurvirkinger, for god form og interessante material- og farvevirkinger er satt inn. Gulldekor og blomstrete overføringsdekorer vil ha vanskelig for å finne seg til rette i det nye miljø. Hvite og ensfargede ting i lyse lette farver, som ikke konkurrerer med maten gir store muligheter... Vi vil se den gode form igjen, befridd for kamuflasje.”)

9. *Ibid.* (“[S]pisebordets saker er bruksting i høyeste grad... fremfor alt... løst funksjonelt.”)

design specification as well as to his (and the applied art community's) modernist aesthetic ideals: Simple, non-intrusive shapes, tempered, abstract decor based on material properties, and bright, blonde colours (available in various pastels). The presence and function of the *Sissel* illustration is thus obvious. What is more interesting is the *absence* of one of Figgjo and Grimsrud's other best-selling designs at the time—a service called *Marie*, which had all the characteristics Grimsrud himself here condemns: scrolled, embellished forms, gold decor and floral tracing decor. Why, then did Grimsrud design and manufacture a product which was the antithesis of everything he believed in? He himself answered:

No one shall deny that the term “the public's demand” contains a reality which must be met... But more important than to follow, is to lead... Imports are modest these days and the Norwegian factories have quite the monopolistic position on the domestic market... But behind every new service the factory launches lies a fortune, in modelling, in moulds and equipment, and this fact, combined with a limited market require consideration. Their production volume is large and this volume can not be more homogeneous than the public for which one produces. One must offer “something for everyone”.¹⁰

This concession may be understood in two ways: Firstly, it can be read as a sigh from the pragmatic, modernist designer who was forced to compromise his ideals because of the regrettable state of public taste. Then again, it might also be interpreted as a critique of the ideologists of the applied art community and their lack of touch with the real life. Grimsrud obviously saw the modernist revolution as an ideal, yet unrealistic project.

11.3 The Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID-gruppen)

The concern for the realities of industrial mass-production was also the prime mover for the foundation of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in March 1955. A group of designers who were more interested in the problem-solving character of product development within the industry than artistic treatment of materials consolidated to further their case. ID-gruppen was one of the founding members of the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) in 1957, and the organization lives on today under the name Norwegian Industrial Designers (Norske Industridesignere—NID).

One of the initiators and the first president of ID-gruppen was Thorbjørn Rygh. He had finished his education as an interior architect at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) in 1949, and soon became

10. *Ibid.* (“Ingen skal nekte for at begrepet “publikums krav” inneholder en realitet som skal imøtekommes... Men viktigere enn å følge er det å føre... Importen er beskjeden for tiden og de norske fabrikkene har litt av en monopolstilling på hjemmemarkedet... Men det står en formue bak hver nyhet fabrikkene bringer av spisestell, i modellarbeide, i arbeidsformer og utstyr, og det faktum sammen med et begrenset marked krever overveieelse. Deres produksjonsvolum er stort og dette volum kan ikke bli mer homogent enn det publikum en produserer for. En er nødt til å bringe “noe for enhver”.”)

involved in organizational work in addition to his design practice. In 1952, he was president of the Norwegian Applied Artists' Union (Norsk Brukskunstnerlag)—the practitioners' trade union within the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst).¹¹ Before as well as after he co-founded ID-gruppen, he both participated in and actively tried to reform the work of the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) and the National Federation by advocating a stronger focus on industrial design.¹²

Like Rygh, most of the members of ID-gruppen were educated at SHKS, and were members of the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) and the National Federation.¹³ This indicates that the foundation of ID-gruppen did not—despite the evident disagreements between Rygh & co. and the majority—represent any vigorous revolt against the applied art movement, but rather a desire to establish a smaller and more coherent arena which could debate and act more efficiently on issues of specific interest to the select circles of industrial designers. Consequently, *Bonytt* regularly carried “infomercials” listing the names and phone numbers of all ID-gruppen members, just as they did with other organizations such as Remlov's own Association of Interior Architects (Interiørarkitektene Forening—IAF). Two years after its foundation, ID-gruppen counted 18 members, of which only two engineers stand out—the remaining 16 had a more conventional design/applied art background.¹⁴ Thus, ID-gruppen can be seen as a sub-network formed within one of the outskirts of a larger, existing actor network.

Nevertheless, the establishment of ID-gruppen marks the beginning of a process running over two decades where the movement, term and profession associated with applied art (*brukskunst*) is fragmented, specialized; challenged from two sides—industrial design (*industridesign*) and handicrafts (*kunsthåndverk*). Quite simplified, this process can be illustrated in a schematic diagram [Figure 11-2]. This process might be said to culminate in the Norwegian Applied Artists' (Norske Brukskunstere) participation in the so-called Artists' action (Kunstneraksjonen) in 1974 and their subsequent change of name to the Norwegian Craftworkers (Norske Kunsthåndverkere) in 1975 through which they defined themselves and their activity as art and disowned any relations to world of industry and commercial business.¹⁵

-
11. Norwegian Applied Artists' Union (Norsk Brukskunstnerlag) was founded in 1930 as the practitioners' trade union within the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst). See: Randi Gaustad, *Foreningen Brukskunst 1918-30: Program, utstillinger og kritikk* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1973) p 117. The Norwegian Applied Artists' Union was reorganized in 1963 as Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere)
 12. Jan Romsaas, *Thorbjørn Rygh og hans rolle i bakgrunnen for, og opprettelsen av Industridesignerutdannelsen i Oslo* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 17-24
 13. Trygve Ask, *God Norsk Design—Konstitueringen av industridesign som profesjon i Norge* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitekturhøgskolen i Oslo, 2004) p 38
 14. The two engineers were Alex Dobrowen and Eirik Olsson. The others were Arnulf Bjørshol, Hermann Bongard, Birger Dahl, Kjell Dahl, Tias Eckhoff, Bjørn Engø, Fredrik Frantze, Tore Hjertholm, Karl Edvard Korseth, Arne Korsmo, Grete Korsmo, Bjørn A. Larsen, Ivo Pannaggi, Thorbjørn Rygh, John Texmon and Steinar Thomassen: *Bonytt*, No. 1, 1957, unpagged.
 15. For more on this process from the handicrafts' point of view, see: Mette Grieg Toyomasu, *Fra brukskunst til kunsthåndverk, en fagpolitisk opprydning. Keramikeren Yngvild Fagerheim som eksponent for en kunstnergruppe* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1997)

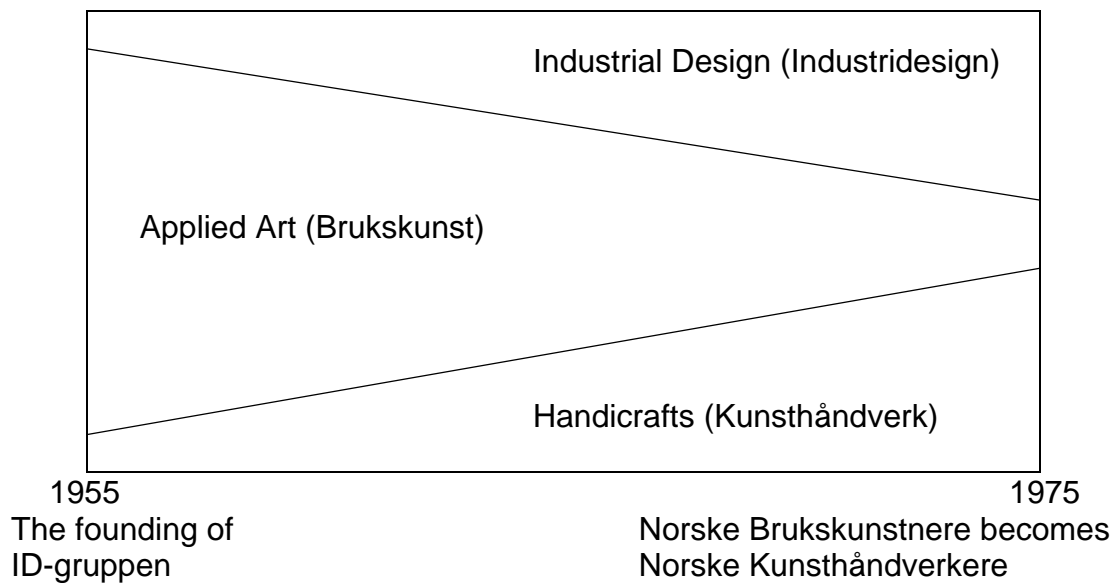


Figure 11–2: Schematic description of the development of the professional design discourse in Norway from 1955 to 1975, where the relatively concordant acceptance of *applied art* (*brukskunst*) as the common denominator of the design field slowly erodes through the challenge from the growing momentum of the sub-communities *industrial design* (*industridesign*) and *handicrafts* (*kunsthåndverk*)

I will limit my discussion of ID-gruppen to where they directly or indirectly participate in the public debate. This delimitation is made based on the arguments made above, that the group throughout the period I am studying represent a specialized sub-category more than an alternative voice. ID-gruppen’s activities were primarily related to topics which were seen as consolidating and constructional for the profession, such as education, contractual relationships, royalties, plagiarism. Moreover, it was a small and Oslo-dominated group. A full decade after its foundation, ID-gruppen counted just about 30 members, of whom only two were based outside Oslo.¹⁶

The only relation between Figgjo and ID-gruppen, for instance, was that Hermann Bongard, who would be hired as contract/freelance designer for Figgjo in the period 1956 to 1963, was member of ID-gruppen.¹⁷ Ragnar Grimsrud on the other hand, who was far more of an industrial designer than Bongard, did not have any contact with ID-gruppen.¹⁸ Nevertheless, both through their practice and organizational work as well as

16. *ID-gruppen—Medlemsliste 1966*, NID archive. One of the two was the Hamar-based interior architect Edvin Helseth. The other was the Sandnes-based engineer Olav Njå who had been invited to become a member after his designs of farm implements for Kverneland Fabrikk A/S had won the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) both in 1964 and 1966: Alf Bøe, *Den norske Designpris de syv første år / The Norwegian Design Award its first seven years* (Oslo: Norsk Designcentrum, 1969) p 45-53. As late as in 1978 the organisation counted only 49 members: Fredrik Wildhagen, “Formgivning for velferd” in Tormod Alnæs (ed.), *Vårt daglige miljø 1918-1978* (Oslo: Landsforbundet norsk brukskunst, 1978) p 21

17. Bongard was hardly the most industrially oriented of Norwegian designers, and his membership in ID-gruppen alone shows that the organization’s views on industrial design were not especially radical.

18. At least as far as I have been able to establish, based on the archives of Figgjo and NID.

through the public debate and *Bonytt*, ID-gruppen and its members definitively made their mark in the design community henceforward.

Already at the 1955 annual autumnal Applied Art Association in Oslo exhibition in the Artists' Exhibition Building (Kustneres hus), ID-gruppen presented themselves to the public. Arne Remlov, as director of the Applied Art Association in Oslo had given the group a separate room at their disposal. A prefabricated kitchen from Emaljeverket was mounted, and the rest of the room displayed various products deemed worthy by ID-gruppen. Most of the exhibited products, like some Bahun plywood chairs designed by Bjørn Engø, Høvik Verk lamps designed by Arnulf Bjørnshol, Dansk Knivfabrik cutlery designed by Tias Eckhoff, Ii-O-Van casseroles designed by Thorbjørn Rygh and Aanonsens bathroom scales designed by Arnulf Bjørnshol, did not by any means challenge the home as the habitual boundaries of the applied art community, but still succeeded in distancing themselves from the sphere of handicrafts.¹⁹

And it was the industrial interpretations of domestic utensils—new materials and manufacturing methods applied to traditional products types—that appealed to the broader public and the press. For instance, the socialist newspaper *Arbeiderbladet* hailed the more mundane exhibited products such as the Emalox anodized aluminium plates and bowls designed by Bjørn Engø, the Cathrineholm enamelled steel plates and bowls designed by Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo for their adherence to a “democratic price range”, and the Hadeland *Siri* pressed glass range designed by Willy Johansson for being both “affordable and beautiful”.²⁰

Remlov's approval was, however, neither unconditional nor perennial. When he picked the 1957 annual autumnal Applied Art Association in Oslo exhibition to pieces—he had then resigned as director of the organizer—and accused it of having regressed into a trade fair, it was primarily the interiors composed by members of ID-gruppen he lashed out against.²¹ A few years later, however, Remlov used the term industrial designer to characterize Torbjørn Afdal, an interior architect and furniture designer who Remlov definitely considered “one of his own”.²²

11.4 Mind the gap—handicrafts vs. industrial design

Even though ID-gruppen officially largely disowned handicrafts, several of their members—like e.g. Hermann Bongard—remained “applied artists” (“*brukskunstnere*”) in the traditional sense, designing products covering the entire spectre from industrially mass-produced goods to exclusive handicrafts. No wonder, then, that central actors in the wider applied art community were even more concerned about the future and role of

19. Viggo Sten Møller, “En norsk utstilling sett med danske øyne” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 214-217

20. N.N., “Interiører på rad og rekke i Brukskunst” in *Arbeiderbladet*, 22.08.1955 (“demokratisk prisklasse... rimelig og pent”)

21. Arne Remlov, “Skudd for baugen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 225-230

22. Arne Remlov, “Honnør til Afdal” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 176-177. Torbjørn Afdal was member of the Association of Interior Architects (Interiørarkitektenes Forening—IAF), which Remlov had co-founded in 1945.

handicrafts in the realm of design. Arne Remlov's remarks on the issue might illustrate the bewilderment and ambivalence characterizing this question:

Firstly, reporting from the Copenhagen Cabinet makers' Guild's (Københavns Snedkerlaug) 1955 *Autumnal Exhibition (Efterårsudstilling)*, he lamented the cabinet makers' absence from the Norwegian furniture design scene.²³ Secondly, reporting from the Applied Art Association in Oslo's (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) autumnal exhibition the following year, he applauded not only the presence of, but even the dominance of the handicraft furniture and stated that "[for] the entire development of our furniture art, their [the cabinet makers'] participation is essential."²⁴ Then, reporting from the 1956 *Cologne Furniture Fair*, he claimed that the Nordic exhibitors were praised in the German specialist press, and that this position was arrived at as "a result of a synthesis of handicraft tradition and healthy industrial development."²⁵ By "healthy", he intended a development where one

faster [can] make the manufacturers follow the qualified designers' intentions—more and more businessmen have evidently more or less unwillingly accepted the fact that against the designers of the time, one fights in vain.²⁶

This highly fatalistic attitude, that modern design is eventually bound to be victorious, empowers the designers—with the *zeitgeist* on their side, they are able to "force" the industry into following their intentions. But Remlov was not always this optimistic on behalf of the designers, and the fatalism is sometimes reversed. He even resorted to promoting the old idea of the *patron of the arts* as the only possible saviour of the future existence of handicrafts, and blamed this situation on the industry's brute behaviour: "[T]he competent designers and craftsmen... are... forced towards the manufacture of the cheap and more ordinary product."²⁷ The ideal situation would, to Remlov, be one where designers and craftsmen were given—either by way of purchases by wealthy patrons or by understanding industrial employers—freedom to carry out artistic experiments at their own will, something from which in turn the industry would benefit. There was no simple solution to the problem.

The closest thing to a common ground was probably the view expressed by architect, designer, painter and professor Arne E. Holm who simply concluded that the methods of production (handicraft or industry) was of secondary importance—as long as it conformed with the material, the form, the market, etc., that is. The core issue of applied art (*brukskunst*) was that of *quality*: "There must be something compelling and educational in the term APPLIED ART [*BRUKSKUNST*]."²⁸ ID-gruppen and the wider

23. Arne Remlov, "Danske håndverksmøbler—og norske" in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1956, p 52-59

24. Arne Remlov, "Interiører og møbler på høstens brukskunstutstilling" in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1956, p 226-230 ("[f]or hele utviklingen av vår møbelkunst er deres medvirken i høyeste grad nødvendig.")

25. Arne Remlov, "Kølnner møbelmesse 1956" in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1956, p 142-145 ("en syntese mellom håndverksmessig tradisjon og sund industriell utvikling.")

26. *Ibid.* p 142 ("raskere [kan] få produsentene til å følge de kvalifiserte formgiveres intensjoner—flere og flere av handelslivets folk har tydelig mer eller mindre motstrebende godtatt det faktum at mot tidens formgivere kjemper man forgjeves.")

27. Arne Remlov, "Vil vi ha et kunsthåndverk" in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1956, p 225 ("de dyktige formgivere og håndverkere... er... tvunget over i fremstilling av den billige og mere ordinære vare.")

applied art community also shared another attitude closely connected to the quality of the object itself, namely its desired durability, longevity and timelessness. A well-designed product would resist and transcend time both in terms of technical quality, use quality and aesthetic quality. Through this highly anti-liberal attitude, the various fractions of the design community joined forces against the deceitful and immoral whims of fashion.²⁹ The moral and aesthetic issues regarding good design versus bad design were thus often given priority over the categorical questions concerning professional frontiers, manufacturing systems, social responsibilities and consumer interests.

From 1956 and 1957, Bernt Heiberg (who now succeeded Torolf Prytz as president of the National Federation) and Ferdinand Aars left their posts on the *Bonytt* editorial committee and were replaced by Peter Andreas Munch (P.A.M.) Mellbye and Arne Lindaas respectively.³⁰ The artist and craftsman Lindaas had collaborated with Magnor Norsk Glassverk and Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik, but even here, he predominantly worked with artware—one-off's or products in small series manufactured by craft-based methods.³¹ He was to become the first artistic director (1958-1960) of the applied art colony Plus, established in Fredrikstad in 1958 by former *Bonytt* editor Per Tannum.³² As the applied art movement later would fractionate into industrial design and handicrafts, Lindaas would follow the latter group. But already in 1957, he clearly represented the craft-oriented side of the applied art community.³³

The architect P.A.M. Mellbye, on the other hand, represented a very different attitude. For many years, he had been a frequent contributor to *Bonytt*, writing articles mostly on the theme of affordable small houses. He had worked with Karen and Odd Brochmann, was a member of PAGON (the Norwegian chapter of CIAM), and his architectural office designed e.g. schools and many health care buildings.³⁴ Mellbye was, in other words, a progressive modernist with a strong social vocation, regarding the design process more as problem-solving than as artistic creation.³⁵ In a sense, the two new members of the

28. Arne E. Holm, "Om kunst og brukskunst" in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1956, p 155 ("Det må ligge noe forpliktende og oppdragende i ordet BRUKSKUNST.") It might be mentioned here, that from 1938 until his appointment as professor at the Norwegian Institute of Technology in 1947, Holm was a lecturer at the National College of Applied Art and Craft. Most of the ID-gruppen members had thus been his students.

29. The Norwegian design community's ideology of timelessness is neatly juxtaposed with the onset of the consumer society in Christine Myrvang, "Tingenes uutholdelige døgnvillhet: Design og konsum i maskinalderen" in Frode Weium (ed.) *Volund 2002* (Oslo: Norsk teknisk museum, 2002) p 29-41

30. Title pages in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1956 and Vol. 17, 1957, unpagged. Although no causal relation has been established regarding Heiberg's retirement, I will mention that the 1957 volume contains a couple of articles which reveal an open and harsh conflict between Heiberg and Remlov and Schjødt. The latter two criticised the floor plan of an OBOS apartment designed by Heiberg and Ola Mørk Sandvik and presented in *Bonytt*, and Heiberg felt wrongly accused, something which set off a public quarrel between the ex-colleagues: Arne Remlov and Liv Schjødt, "Om utnyttelse av kvadratmetere" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 33-37 and Bernt Heiberg (with responses from Remlov, Schjødt, Heiberg (again) and Remlov (yet again), "Om utnyttelse av kvadratmetere" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 89-92

31. Tor Refsum, "Arne Lindaas" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 157-159

32. Wenche Anette Johannessen, *Brukskunst-senteret PLUS—Per Tannums ønske om å etablere et designsentrum* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 40. His successor in 1960 would be Hermann Bongard. Roar Høyland then took over from 1962 to 1965.

33. See also: Anne Lise Aas, "Brukskunstneren Arne Lindaas" in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 16-17

34. Arne Gunnarsjaa, *Arkitekturleksikon* (Oslo: Abstrakt, 1999) p 505

Bonytt editorial committee might be said to represent each of the two emerging fractions of the applied art movement.

Both trajectories—towards an independent handicrafts scene and towards a more thoroughly *industrial* design position—were both clearly described and promoted in *Bonytt*. Even Jens von der Lippe, who had always spoken warmly of the virtues of the combined figure designer-craftsman, seems to have lost his faith:

[T]his is a problem today: What shall be the handicraft's place? Can it gradually become overrun by the industry, get squeezed into a wretched corner, eventually forgotten both by practitioners and customers? Much indicate that such a development has begun and will continue all the way, if the handicraft do not find its form. It will not, then, be a question of "competing with the industry". Rationalization, efficiency improvements etc. lead precisely to industry, and thus away from handicraft as such. The path must be to find a new purpose, a reassessment which gives the handicraft its own place as an essential supplement to the rationalized industry. A cultivation is required, where the emphasis is placed on the artistic element.³⁶

Von der Lippe has resigned: There was no longer room for the long romanticized notion of applied art as one, relatively homogeneous field which could unite or even transcend the different virtues of handicrafts and industry. Harriet Clayhills saw the same tendency, but was more optimistic in her conversations with young Norwegian studio ceramists: "Here [in Norway], these two opposites are not yet taken to extremes. Consequently, the affordable utility article at handicraft prices still has vitality."³⁷ But the incipient polarization of the applied art field between handicrafts and industrial design slowly started to enter the collective awareness. This did not, however, in anyway preclude designers from operating across the fields, but the acknowledgment that handicrafts and industry were two different spheres with very different premises and prerequisites was slowly taking hold.

Normally, this crossover activity was conducted by craftsman designers—like e.g. Arne Lindaas—who occasionally took on industrial design commissions. But it could also be the other way around. An interesting example of that is the work of Bjørn Engø. He was an interior architect by training, and started out his career in the traditional way,

35. An indication of his progressive attitudes can be found in his admiration for Richard Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes and especially for Richard W. Hamilton's all plastic *Montesanto House of the Future* which could be experienced at Disneyland from 1957 to 1968: P.A.M. Mellbye, "Hus av plast" in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 126-129. For more on the *Montesanto House of the Future*, see: Jeffrey L. Meikle, *American Plastic—A Cultural History* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1995) p 205-220

36. Jens von der Lippe, "Potter og kar fra en svunnen tid—fra en kommende tid?" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 53 ("[D]ette er et problem i dag: Hvor blir kunsthåndverkets plass? Kan det etterhvert bli rent overende av industrien, bli trykket opp i en ussel krok, glemt til slutt både av utøvere og avtagere? Meget tyder på at en slik utvikling er i gang og vil fortsette linen ut, om ikke kunsthåndverket finner sin form. Det blir ikke spørsmål da om å "konkurrere med industrien". Rasjonalisering, effektivisering osv. fører nettopp over i industri og altså vekk fra kunsthåndverket som sådant. Veien må bli å finne frem til en ny målsetting, en omvurdering som gir kunsthåndverket dets egen plass som et vesentlig supplement til den rasjonaliserte industrien. En rendyrking må til, hvor vekten ligger på det kunstneriske element.")

37. Harriet Clayhills, "Pottemakerer for egen regning" in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 82 ("Hos oss er ennå ikke disse to motpolene bygget ut i sin ytterste konsekvens. Følgelig har den rimelige bruksvaren med håndverkspris fremdeles livsrom.")

designing interiors in addition to furniture for both cabinet makers and industrial production. In the 1950s, he became more and more engaged in industrial design, and the design of domestic utensils in anodized aluminium for Emalox would take up most of his time [Figure 11-3]. Many of these products, especially the bowls, plates, ashtrays etc.

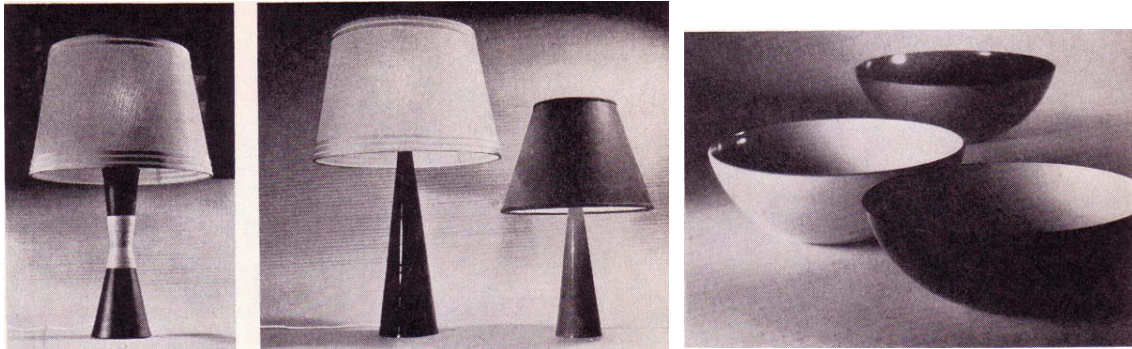


Figure 11-3: Table lamps and bowls (anodized aluminium) Emalox, ca. 1957. Designer: Bjørn Engø.
(Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 17, 1957)

became very popular and widespread due to their novel material application and bright, lively colours—combined with low prices.³⁸ In that respect, the Emalox products may be said to embody Engø’s passion: “cheap products in good design”.³⁹ It should be no surprise, then, that Engø had been, together with Thorbjørn Rygh, a co-founder of ID-gruppen two years earlier.⁴⁰

But even a democratically and industrially oriented designer like Engø had another side to his activity. On the side, he made more exclusive bowls and plates in enamelled pinchbeck (a copper alloy). The products were stamped by machines in a factory, but the enamel was applied by hand in Engø’s own basement, transforming them from mundane utensils into artistic expressions. But Engø stressed again and again that this was merely a sideline activity, something he did on evenings and weekends, or when industrial commissions were scarce:

What is a poor industrial designer to do? Handicrafts can be useful to himself as a supplementation of factory production, but personally I have not imagined it as a main activity. The manufacture of the cheap and at the same time aesthetically sterling mass product is my *great* interest.⁴¹

38. Another indication of the remarkable popularity of these products is that several other brands, such as Olden, Elox, Eloxøren, *et al.*, suddenly appeared, churning out similar products.

39. Harriet Clayhills, “Bjørn Engø tegner tekstil, aluminium, kobber og lager emaljearbeider” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 42-44 (“billige varer i god design”)

40. The other two initiators were Kjell Dahl and Karl Edvard Korseth: Romsaas, *op.cit.* p 25

41. Bjørn Engø quoted in Harriet Clayhills, “Bjørn Engø tegner tekstil, aluminium, kobber og lager emaljearbeider” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 42 (“Hva skal en stakkars industrial designer gjøre? Det kan være nyttig for ham selv med håndverk som komplettering til fabrikkmessig produksjon, men personlig har jeg ikke tenkt meg det som hovedoppgave. Fremstillingen av den billige og samtidig estetisk fullverdige serievaren er min *store* interesse.”)

It is fascinating, then, that when FORUM—the newly inaugurated permanent sales exhibition / showroom run by the Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) in collaboration with Oslo Trade and Industry Association (Oslo Håndverks- og Industriforening) and managed by Arne Remlov—organized a separate exhibition with Bjørn Engø in 1957, his handicraft products were given as much—if not more—attention as his industrial design projects.⁴² This tells us two things: Firstly, that the Applied Art Association in Oslo was far from hostile towards industrial design, but—even through FORUM—tended to give priority to artistic expressions (where his handicraft products evidently were considered superior to his industrial designs) despite Engø's own insistence on being first and foremost an industrial designer.⁴³ Secondly, it tells us that even at the heart of ID-gruppen, there was still room for handicrafts as manufacturing method and acceptance of the values of artistic expression.

In 1957, *Bonytt* teamed up with the Norwegian Export Council and presented a special issue on the export potential of Norwegian design.⁴⁴ The magazine issue had texts in both Norwegian and English, and was designed to stimulate the interest in Norwegian manufactured goods abroad. The layout featured short texts on various product groups (categorized by materials) accompanied by a large selection of photographic illustrations of available products. It was of course no coincidence that this initiative was taken at this time—it was because, as the Norwegian Export Council's director, Otto Malterud put it in his introduction:

Owing to the considerable demands made by Norway's own home-makers after the war, producers have hitherto not been able to earmark much of their output for export. Now, however, with schemes of modernisation and rationalisation completed, Norwegian producers are in a position to handle large additional orders.⁴⁵

Of course, this being propaganda, Malterud here made the need for export sound like a generous offer rather than a plea. But the production surplus in Norwegian manufactured goods industry was now becoming a serious problem, with many relatively large manufacturers established since the war, a less frantic domestic market and increased imports. But what should be Norway's export strategy? Our new, modern factories (like e.g. Figgjo) may have been large—now even problematically large—on a domestic scale, but in an international market they would be dwarfs. The Export Council, probably heavily influenced by the applied art community, presented the following solution:

42. Harriet Clayhills, "Bjørn Engø tegner tekstil, aluminium, kobber og lager emaljearbeider" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 42-44. Eight years later, in 1965, FORUM staged another exhibition of Engø's work, this time entirely devoted to his handicraft production: Lone Teilmann, "Mangfoldig designer med farveprakt" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 148-151

43. Also in Nordic contexts this insistence was made: "Bjørn Engø is a typical industrial designer" was the wording chosen in Erik Zahle (ed.), *Hjemmets brukskunst—Kunsthåndværk og Kunstindustri i Norden* (København: Hassings, 1961) p 240 ("Bjørn Engø er en udpræget industriel designer")

44. Of course, this internationalism went both ways: *Bonytt* kept bringing reports from the international scene of art, crafts and architecture—but also industrial design. See e.g. Kristian Kielland, "Britene haler i land" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 217-219 and Arne Remlov, "Design i Japan" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 66-67

45. Otto E. Malterud, "Available for Export—Introduction" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 93

Our home market is small and the scope for mass-production is limited. The demand has always been for quality rather than quantity. Tue [sic], we now use modern technical aids wherever reasonable, and our producers have gone in for a measure of specialisation; but it is still a characteristic of our furniture and art-craft workshops the individual skill matters.⁴⁶

In other words, it was taken for granted that Norwegian industrial design (understood as affordable, mass-produced products) could not compete on the international market due to insufficient production volumes and high production costs. It was therefore better, according to Malterud—who's views here seems more or less identical to the applied art association's—to promote the more exclusive handicrafts when lobbying for Norwegian exports. In retrospect, this strategy seems peculiar because it was undoubtedly the larger-scale industrially-based manufacturers who needed expanded export markets the most.

Malterud's bias towards the exclusive handicrafts was on the whole followed up by the authors presenting the different product groups as well. In his introduction to Norwegian glass production, Hermann Bongard spoke warmly of the elite production of art glass and hand-blown crystal, while he disparaged the more affordable, mundane production—including the otherwise generally praised Hadeland pressed glass range *Siri* designed by Bongard's former colleague Willy Johansson.⁴⁷ But despite his open appeal for a more artistic practice in Norwegian glass design, the illustrations accompanying his text also include parts from the *Siri* range and other examples of utility glass products.⁴⁸ This suggests that Bongard advocated a catalytic development of the above mentioned polarization of the applied art field.

The bias towards the exclusive handicrafts is perhaps even more evident in Arne Lindaas' article on silver and other metals and Nils Jørgensen's presentation of woodwork.⁴⁹ Jens von der Lippe's text on ceramics is slightly more balanced. Despite its preponderance of studio ceramics—which happened to be his own trade—at least the illustrations include both Figgjo's service *Sissel* designed by Ragnar Grimsrud and Stavangerflint products designed by Eystein Sandnes side by side with Porsgrund china products and various studio ceramics.⁵⁰

Arne Remlov, speaking on behalf of the furniture industry, was more optimistic and enterprising on behalf of the potential of Norwegian industrial design than the Export Council and his fellow authors. He claimed that

46. *Ibid.*

47. It should be mentioned here that Bongard recently had left his position as designer at Hadeland Glassverk (1947-1954), where he had designed mostly art glass. He did design some more mundane glass products, such as the series *Tullik* (1950), *Guri* (1954) and *Arizona* (1954), but never designed anything in pressed glass: Alf Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963) p 268-271

48. Hermann Bongard, "Norwegian Glass" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 94-97

49. Arne Lindaas, "Norwegian Silver and Other Metals" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 98-101 and Nils Jørgensen, "Concerning Woodwork" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 110-111

50. Jens von der Lippe, "Norwegian Ceramics Today" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 106-109. Eystein Sandnes was a young, but already acclaimed designer who came to Stavangerflint from Magnor Norsk Glassverk in 1955. He left Stavangerflint again after just two years when he was called to Porsgrund. From 1959 he became Tias Eckhoff's successor as design manager there. But despite his short residence at Stavangerflint, his designs certainly boosted the young company's reputation in the applied art community.

we are excellently equipped [sic] to invade foreign markets, with a wide range of well-executed and handy furniture, excellent designers, and a “quality” industry with a considerable capacity.⁵¹

It is of course hard to say what he deemed to be “a considerable capacity”, but he clearly saw great opportunities also for industrially manufactured furniture. This is interesting to note, because as we now know, the furniture industry would become the most successful of all branches when it comes to exports of manufactured goods. That being said, also Remlov’s presentation contains as many illustrations of handicraft products as it does industrially manufactured ones.⁵²

11.5 The distinctive power of the modernist aesthetic

The Norwegian section at the *XI Triennale* discussed above might be said to have represented a wide scope of the national modernist design scene, spanning from art glass and silverware to anonymous household appliances and mass-produced, affordable domestic utensils. Although these extremities certainly exemplified fundamental and important controversies regarding e.g. manufacturing methods and social availability, the aesthetic or formal aspects seem to be characterized by a larger degree of consensus, through conformity to modifications of a modernist idiom. Still, there were voices who begged to differ also on this point. In 1958, *Bonytt* presented an issue dedicated to “life in the countryside”. In an article on furniture for the country home, interior architect Torvald Helland—who designed furniture for the Domestic Crafts Society (Husfliden), both prefabricated and do-it-yourself solutions—promoted the development of furniture based on tradition, and that such products should

be allowed at exhibitions in competition with the abundance of “Triennale” rooms. By the modernists, one would of course be told off as romantic. But I believe that it is the modernists who are romantic in the sense of being unrealistic, when they expect light glass houses with ascetic household goods to appeal to others than limited groups of people with a very special conduct of life.⁵³

Albeit the Domestic Crafts Society (Husfliden) definitely was a fringe group in the Norwegian design society, it is interesting to note that such traditionalist attitudes still existed and still were voiced in *Bonytt*.

51. Arne Remlov, “Norwegian Modern—Furniture Designed for Home Market and Export” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 112

52. *Ibid.* p 112-116

53. Torvald Helland interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Møbler til bygdehemmet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 24 (“kunne vises på utstillinger i konkurranse med mengden av “Triennale”-rom. Av modernistene ville man selvsagt ble utskjelt som romantisk. Man jeg tror nå det er modernistene som er romantiske i betydningen urealistiske, når de venter seg at lette glasshus med asketisk bohøve skal kunne tiltale andre enn begrensede grupper av mennesker med en helt spesiell livsførsel.”)

An illustration accompanying an article on the farmhouse kitchen in the same issue shows a breakfast table set with a Figgjo service called *Grete* [Figure 11-4]. *Grete* was



Figure 11-4: *Bonytt*'s ideal breakfast table for a farmhouse kitchen: Service *Grete* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1951. Designer: Ragnar Grimrud. Cutlery *Korsmo* (silver plate) J. Tostrup, 1949. Design: Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 18, 1958)

introduced in 1951, and was the company's first truly "modernist" (i.e. devoid of figurative decor) service in earthenware. In the seven years which had passed since *Grete* was launched, it had never before been presented in *Bonytt*. One might ask why *Grete*'s successor *Sissel*, which was introduced in 1954 and had been presented in *Bonytt* several times was not preferred also here. Anyhow, the caption read: "Who would not cheer up faced with this breakfast table? In all its simplicity it is appealing and beautiful, set with Norwegian products available all over the country."⁵⁴

The illustration is clearly intended to portray a mundane, simple and relaxed ambience—an everyday, rustic peasant breakfast. In that respect, Figgjo's service *Grete* surely fits the bill with its unassuming image—but the accompanying J. Tostrup silver

54. Signe Sandbu, "Kjøkkenet på gården" in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 23 ("Hvem blir ikke i godt humør av å komme til dette frokostbordet? I all sin enkelhet er det innbydende og vakkert, dekket med Norske ting som finnes i handelen landet over.")

plate cutlery designed by Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo and bearing their name disrupts this picture. But this illustration is of course staged; it is a *fictitious* peasant breakfast table—not an authentic one. The subtle distinctions that might arise in such staged situations, or artificial realities, are not always easy to detect—at least not without the advantage of hindsight. Still, Odd Brochmann offered a reflection on the nature of personal taste which might give a clue when he stated that “ordinary people under fairly stable circumstances will always prefer the personal freedom to choose the same, within their vocation, their standing.”⁵⁵ Effectively, what Brochmann did, here, was to define personal taste as a tool for social distinction.

This sounds suspiciously like Pierre Bourdieu—but the simple fact remains that these lines were written in 1958—21 years before the French sociologist first published his seminal book on this topic.⁵⁶ Another French sociologist, Jean Baudrillard, has made a related interesting point, claiming to reveal the “unconscious strategy” behind the modernist designers’ official desire to democratize and popularize “good” design, “being all the while surprised that these [modernist] forms do not spontaneously seduce the mass public”: Because, Baudrillard asserts;

beautiful, stylized, modern objects are subtly created (despite all reversed good faith) *in order not to be understood by the majority*—at least not straight away. Their social function is first to be distinctive signs, to be objects that will distinguish those who distinguish them.⁵⁷

Bearing these points in mind, I find it very hard to believe that any J. Tostrup *Korsmo* cutlery has ever scraped the surface of a Figgjo *Grete* plate, as their relative positions in Bourdieu’s co-ordinate system of the social room based on social and cultural capital are too disparate. Or, if one chooses to side with Baudrillard; the J. Tostrup *Korsmo* cutlery was intended not to be appreciated by the common owners of the Figgjo *Grete* service. Another association that springs to mind regarding the subtle distinctions and the seeming equality played out here, is George Orwell’s immortal and satiric remark: “All animals are equal, But some animals are more equal than others.”⁵⁸ The J. Tostrup *Korsmo* cutlery was certainly more equal than the Figgjo *Grete* service—the distinctive power lay in making them *appear* equal.

In 1957, Hermann Bongard became the third Norwegian to win the Lunning Prize since its establishment in 1951.⁵⁹ As mentioned above, the first Norwegian Lunning laureate was Grete Prytz Korsmo who was awarded the prize from her brother and his

55. Odd Brochmann, “Om personlighet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 59 (“alminnelige mennesker under noenlunde stabile omstendigheter alltid vil foretrekke personlig frihet til å velge å ha det likt, innenfor sitt kall, sin stand.”)

56. First French edition 1979. For an English translation, see: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984)

57. And, Baudrillard continues, the dissemination and popularity of modern design aesthetics only breeds a more finetuned system of distinction: “[T]he fact that a system of identification is now in place which is clearly legible to all, that the signs of value are entirely socialized and objectivized, by no means implies any true ‘democratization’. On the contrary, it would appear that *the insistence on univocal reference merely exacerbates the desire to discriminate*: within the very framework of this homogeneous system, a perpetually renewed obsession with hierarchies and distinctions is to be observed.”: Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1989) p 48 & 195

58. George Orwell, *Animal Farm: A fairy story* [1945] (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951) p 114

friends and colleagues on the committee in 1952 and celebrated with a *Bonytt* portrait interview. When Tias Eckhoff won the following year, it was not mentioned at all in *Bonytt*, which seems quite strange given the fact that Eckhoff pretty much was everybody's darling.⁶⁰ Bongard's 1957 win, on the other hand, was honoured with a presentation of his career and production. At this time, the first results of Bongard's recent collaboration with Figgjo Fajanse A/S started to show. Håkon Stenstadvold's presentation of these was, however, quite peculiar:

In a series of stoneware products for Figgjo Fajanse we find Hermann Bongard's sense of decor and the decorated surface. There are some cylindric vases in white semi-matt and lustrous glaze. Printed on them are line drawings which are either patterns or pictures. And then, the white cylinder constantly form a part of a drawing and gives us a little curious feeling, as if it were a graphic print rolled up and which we would like to see in its entirety.⁶¹

It is not only the rather grave blunder of mistaking the product's material—which is earthenware, not stoneware—that indicates that Stenstadvold here ventured into the periphery of his own domain. The way he describes the vases as rolled-up graphic prints—as fine art rather than applied art (not to mention design)—reveals with all possible clarity his identity as a painter, and explains why the article is so biased towards the purely aesthetic aspects of Bongard's production. Regarding these specific vases, however, Stenstadvold's reflections might not be so far-fetched after all. They would never become mass-produced utilities anyway, and are better understood as experiments in form, colour and technique [Figure 11-5]. Bongard's contribution to Figgjo's commercially viable mass-produced products would not emerge until a couple of years later. This will be duly discussed in the next chapter.

Apart from the article's title, the text says nothing about the award, its function or status.⁶² This, together with the negligence of Eckhoff's win in 1953, suggests that the Lunning Prize was not considered to be of much importance by *Bonytt*.⁶³ But then again, the Norwegian award the Jacob Prize, named after the Applied Art Association's

59. Helena Dahlbäck Lutteman and Marianne Uggla (eds.), *The Lunning Prize* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1986) p 86-89. Bongard had been chosen as the Norwegian sub-committee's first candidate already at the first edition of the Lunning Prize in 1951. The statutes of the award stated that the candidates should be young practitioners, and the fact that the prize consisted of a travel grant supports the age-aspect. But the Lunning committee chose to de-emphasize this, and turned the award into a symbol of acknowledgment for mid-career practitioners. Thus, Bongard—being only 30 years in 1951—was not yet merited enough, and was downgraded by the Norwegian sub-committee (T. Prytz and F. Aars) until he was considered “ripe” again in 1957: Astrid Skjerven, *Goodwill for Scandinavian Design—Lunningprisen 1951-70* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2001) p 177

60. It was, however, mentioned in the newspaper *Aftenposten*, where Eckhoff stated that he wanted to use the travel grant to study industrial design in the USA: N.N., “Den eksklusive Lunning-pris til normann iår også” in *Aftenposten*, 25.08.1953. As it turned out, Eckhoff changed his plans and went to Egypt instead—to study ancient art rather than industrial design: H.Aa., ““Porselenet er vakrest uten krimskrans og sterke farver”” in *Aftenposten*, 08.01.1955

61. Håkon Stenstadvold, “Lunningsprisen [sic] 1958 [sic] til Hermann Bongard” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 49-52 (“I en rekke stengodsvarer for Figgjo Fajanse finner vi igjen denne Hermann Bongards sans for dekoren og den dekorerte flaten. Der er noen sylindriske vaser i hvit halvmatt og blank glasur. På dem er trykt strektegninger, som enten er mønstre eller bilder. Og da danner den hvite sylindren stadig en del av en tegning og gir oss en liten nysgjerrig følelse, liksom av et grafisk blad som er rullet sammen, og som vi gjerne ville se det hele av.”)

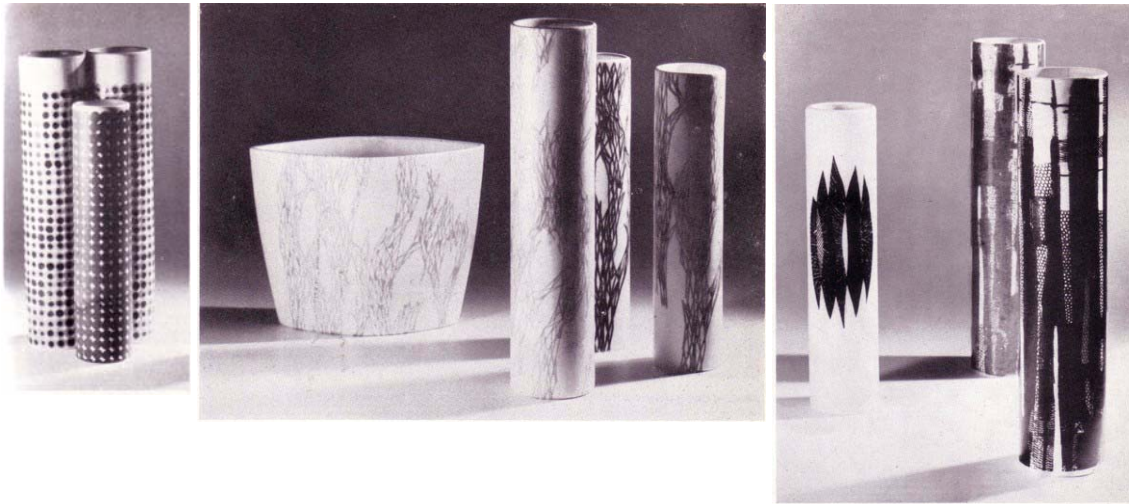


Figure 11-5: Vases (earthenware) Figgjo Fajanse A/S, 1957. Designer: Hermann Bongard. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 18, 1958)

(Foreningen Brukskunst) co-founder Jacob Tostrup Prytz and established in 1957, had not either been mentioned in *Bonytt*—not even in a portrait interview with Willy Johansson—the 1958 Jacob Prize winner.⁶⁴

Another indication of the augmenting momentum of the modern design aesthetic and its increased acceptance in the broader public in the late 1950s can be found in the design of something so “anti-functional” as figurines. As we have seen earlier, many influential elements of the Norwegian applied art community had long shown an unexpected understanding for the public flare for this class of objects with no utilitarian function—as long as they did not dominate their environment and were “good” in terms of technical and aesthetic quality. So, when figurines were given a modern formal language—highly conventionalized, but not entirely abstract—they could be considered excellent design. *Bonytt* sure did not question the absolute lack of utilitarian function when presenting and hailing Arne Tjomslund’s designs in whale tusk and wood, manufactured in series by Hiorth & Østlyngen; their mere appearance and emotional function as provokers of pleasure, joy and amusement was enough—as long as they adhered to the modernist aesthetic [Figure 11-6].⁶⁵

62. Håkon Stenstadvold, “Lunningsprisen [sic] 1958 [sic] til Hermann Bongard” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 49-52. The prize was announced each year on Fredrik Lunning’s birthday, December 7th, something which might explain why Stenstadvold managed to mistake for which year Bongard had been awarded the prize.

63. Although Eckhoff’s Lunning Prize briefly came up in an interview six years later: Harriet Clayhills, “Fem profiler på Porsgrund i Porsgrunn” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 67. The Lunning Prize was also mentioned on a more general level in Karen Vigmostad, “På Fifth Avenue” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 141, but the interior designer Vigmostad was employed by the award’s patron, Georg Jensen Inc., New York and did thus not represent the Norwegian applied art community—although she was a Norwegian emigrant.

64. Harriet Clayhills, “Glasskunstneren Willy Johansson og hans bakgrunn” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 196-199 For more on the Jacob Prize, see: Leena Mannila (ed.), *God form i Norge—Jacob-prisens vinnere 1957-1995* (Oslo: Norsk Form / Messel, 1996)

65. Harriet Clayhills, “Arne Tjomslund—Designer fra zoologisk museum” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 112-115

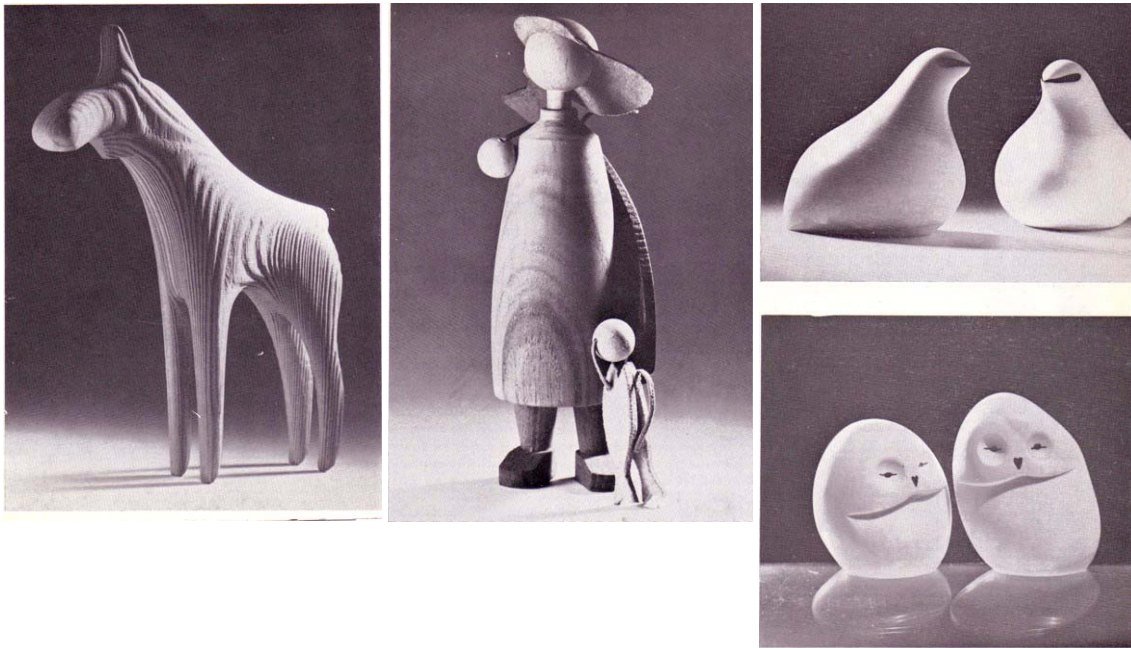


Figure 11-6: Figurines (elk and fisherman in wood, white grouses and snow owls in whale tusk) Hiorth & Østlyngen, ca 1959. Designer: Arne Tjomsland. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 19, 1959)

11.6 Promoting the unaffected

P.A.M. Mellbye and Arne Lindaas' time of service on the *Bonytt* editorial committee amounted to three and two years respectively. In 1959 they were replaced by two prominent, but very different personalities in Norwegian architecture; Odd Brochmann and Christian Norberg-Schulz.⁶⁶ What they had in common, though, was that their legacy would be dominated by texts—not buildings. Brochmann's influence on *Bonytt* was not likely to change much by his entry in the editorial committee, because, as we have learned, he had been a frequent and enthusiastic contributor to *Bonytt* long before that. Mellbye's youthful and vigorous promotion of progressive modernist ideology would to some degree find its heir in Norberg-Schulz, although the latter's approach was more theoretical than Mellbye's hands-on attitude. Lindaas' outlook on design, with his predilection for the artistic handicraft, can not be said to have had a natural successor in any of the new members. But these attitudes were still present in the editorial committee through the lasting presence of Håkon Stenstadvold and, at least partially, Jens von der Lippe.

Any elaborate presentation of Brochmann should by now be unnecessary. In 1956, Arne Korsmo had taken over his professorship in architectural design at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH), and the following year Brochmann was visiting professor at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts' School of Architecture (Kunstakademiets Arkitektsskole) in Copenhagen. In his teaching,

66. Title page in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, unpagged.

Brochmann relentlessly promoted an ideology based on lessons from anonymous architecture, the belief in enlightenment of the people and social democratic values.⁶⁷ As we have seen before, he was a highly polyvalent figure, displaying a multitude of disparate and even conflicting attitudes and inspirations in his writings. But he always remained a pragmatic dreamer and idealist; he never spoke much of architecture in terms of artistic creation, *bel-esprit* inspiration and virtuosity.

Christian Norberg-Schulz was in many respects Brochmann's antithesis. He had graduated in architecture from the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zürich in 1949, and studied art history and psychology at Harvard University as a Fulbright-fellow in 1952-53. One of his teachers in Switzerland was Sigfried Giedion, who gave Norberg-Schulz the task of establishing a Norwegian chapter of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). This resulted in the Progressive arkitekters gruppe, Oslo, Norge (PAGON), headed by Norberg-Schulz' employer Arne Korsmo. Through this collaboration, he also practised as a designing architect—their most notable project being a row of three semi-detached houses (of which two were the architects' own homes) in Oslo built in 1954—but Norberg-Schulz would develop into primarily a theoretician. He taught at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) from 1951 to 1956, he was visiting lecturer at the Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) in Ulm in 1957, and lectured in architectural history at the University of Oslo in 1958-60.⁶⁸ He finished his doctoral dissertation *Intentions in Architecture* in 1963/64—a work that would make him internationally acclaimed.⁶⁹ But when Norberg-Schulz in 1959 entered the *Bonytt* editorial committee, he was still just a 33 year old architect, although with teaching experience, a strong international orientation and network plus a veritable theoretical interest.⁷⁰

In 1959, *Bonytt* sent the journalist Harriet Clayhills to Stavanger to report on the state of affairs there, based on the latest endeavours of the Stavanger Applied Art Association (Stavanger Brukskunstforening) and the region's earthenware manufacturers. The association had just organized an exhibition of tableware featuring 20 different tables set exclusively with Norwegian, and predominantly with local products.⁷¹ One of the manufacturers who naturally was represented at the exhibition, Stavangerflint, had in 1957 lost their acclaimed designer Eystein Sandnes to Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik, but

67. For more on Brochmann's teaching (and how Korsmo's differed from it), see: Nina Berre, *Fysiske idealer i norsk arkitekturutdanning 1945-1970* [Doctoral dissertation] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2002) p 153-183

68. Gunnarsjaa, *op.cit.* p 549-550. For an account of the turbulent but pioneering HfG Ulm, see: René Spitz, *hfg ulm—The View behind the Foreground: The Political History of the Ulm School of Design 1953-1968* (Stuttgart/London: Edition Axel Menges, 2002)

69. He defended his doctoral dissertation at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH) on April 17th 1964, but the text was first published in 1963: Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in architecture* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1963). Among his later works are e.g. Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Architettura occidentale: architettura come storia di forme significative* (Milano: Electa Editrice, 1974), Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius loci: paesaggio, ambiente, architettura* (Milano: Electa editrice, 1979) and Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The functionalist Arne Korsmo* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1986).

70. The editorial life must have agreed with Norberg-Schulz, because he would later serve as editor of both *Arkitektnytt* and *Byggekunst*.

71. Harriet Clayhills, "Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger" in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 16-20

the company managed to find a replacement who was even more celebrated: Kåre Berven Fjeldsaa.

In fact, Clayhills wrote that this “catch” presented “a particularly good reason to visit.”⁷² Fjeldsaa started his career in William Knutzen’s ceramics studio, but had run his own studio since 1947. He was one of the first Norwegian ceramists who began using stoneware, and it was these products that made his reputation. He was even awarded a gold medal at the *X Triennale di Milano* in 1954 for a blue jar, and was chosen as Norway’s number two-candidate to the 1956 Lunning Prize.⁷³ Fjeldsaa stated that he found running his own stoneware studio had become too much of a financial strain and also a bit monotonous in the long run, and thus embraced the job offer from Stavangerflint.⁷⁴

Having no experience from industry, he initially spent a lot of time studying the practical requirements of mass-production. Despite his background in studio handicrafts, he soon took on the identity of an industrial designer: “The idea that interests me the most just now is... mass products at reasonable prices.” And, in line with the edifying tradition of applied art movement, he declared that it “must be possible to get the public to appreciate genuine ceramic qualities rather than the many false effects which today misadorn [sic] the ‘ornamental ceramics’.”⁷⁵ Notwithstanding the change of material, production methods and volume, his designs for Stavangerflint would be heavily influenced by his past experience with stoneware and its rustic, robust character. An early and illustrative example of this is the immensely popular service *Brunette* launched in 1962, which would remain in production for a very long period, even extending into the period after Stavangerflint merged with Figgjo Fajanse in 1968.⁷⁶

Fjeldsaa’s competitor and future colleague, Ragnar Grimsrud, took a more positive attitude to the public’s taste than the new Stavangerflint designer, and his remarks on this topic also reveals a development since the last time his opinions had been voiced in *Bonytt* four years earlier. When asked by Clayhills whether he considered the public’s taste to be encumbering in the design work, he answered:

No, the functional form neither should nor need be renounced. And the desire for “cosyness” which the public often has when it comes to utility articles, can be accomplished in an artistically acceptable manner. There are plenty examples of good and beautiful things becoming sales successes. The attentive public here at home has grown

72. Harriet Clayhills, “Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 16 (“særlig grunn til et besøk.”)

73. Skjerven, *op.cit.* Appendix II, p 8

74. Fjeldsaa’s decision to leave his studio practice to become an industrial designer at Stavangerflint was later lamented by the studio ceramists Dagny and Finn Hald: “Kåre B. Fjeldsaa [was] once a guiding star in the field of stoneware, but he has since buried himself in the industry so that no one hears from him anymore”: Dagny and Finn Hald interviewed in Roar Høyland, “To keramikere har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 195 (“Kåre B. Fjeldsaa [var jo] en gang en ledestjerne på stengodsets område, men siden har han begravet seg i industrien så ingen hører noe mer til ham.”)

75. Kåre Berven Fjeldsaa interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 17 (“Den idé som interesserer meg mest akkurat nå er... serievare til rimelige priser... må være mulig å få publikum til å sette pris på ekte keramiske kvaliteter i stedet for de mange falske effekter som i dag mispryder [sic] ‘pyntekeramikken’.”)

76. Fjeldsaa remained in his job after the merger, and, together with Jørg Løve Nielsen, succeeded Ragnar Grimsrud as design manager of the merged company after Grimsrud retired in 1973.

plentiful since the war.⁷⁷

Grimsrud also stressed, like he had in 1955, the importance of considering market potential and production technology and methods in the design process. But the uneasiness which then had haunted his pragmatic concession of having to design “something for everyone” was now replaced by a much more optimistic, consolidated and consistent attitude. What seems to have caused this change is, as the quote shows, a greater belief in the momentum of the modern design aesthetic, and—perhaps equally important—the development of new production technology such as e.g. the silk screen printing decor which allowed a more flexible product range.⁷⁸ This technique made the design of own decors much simpler and cheaper, and the public’s various affections could thus be indulged more easily. Grimsrud also got to present Figgjo’s latest service, *Benta* [Figure 11-7].⁷⁹ This product did not make use of silk screen printing decor, but of the ground relief decor which had been developed for the 1954 *Sissel* service and became somewhat of a hallmark for Figgjo in this period.

An event that got a lot of attention even in the non-professional press—i.e. newspapers, etc.—was the opening of the Applied Art Centre PLUS (Brukskunst-senteret PLUS) in Fredrikstad in November 1958. The institution had come about as a result of dreams and ambitions which the entrepreneur, businessman and former *Bonytt* co-editor Per Tannum had developed already in the early 1940s—a centre of expertise, knowledge and promotion of applied art and a meeting point for craftsmen, designers, industry, marketers, retailers and the public.⁸⁰ *Bonytt*’s Harriet Clayhills applauded this grand idea, but not unconditionally. She found it opportune to state that in order to justify its existence, PLUS would have to become something more than a picturesque tourist attraction where the public could see artisans in action in the workshops. And despite Tannum’s assurances, she did not seem overly convinced that craftsmen would learn industrial design by gathering in a cluster of *Empire* houses.⁸¹ Time would prove these reservations appropriate. Apart from some individual projects, the organization did not manage to bring about a new and more holistic understanding and practice of industrial design in Norway. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s PLUS developed into a medieval-style handicraft colony run by a number of self-employed studio artisan-craftsmen.

The representation and (self-)perception of the Norwegian design community at the end of the 1950s can be illustrated through a couple of the observations made on the basis of the 1959 Applied Art Association in Oslo (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) autumnal exhibition. The young architect Christian Norberg-Schulz’ review of the exhibited furniture is a veritable frontal attack on Norwegian furniture design. He

77. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 18 (“Nei, den funksjonelle formen hverken bør eller trenger man gi avkall på. Og det ønskemål om “hyggelighet” som publikum gjerne har når det gjelder bruksting, kan gjennomføres på en kunstnerisk forsvarlig måte. Det finnes nok av eksempler på at gode og pene ting er blitt salgssuksesser. Det våkne publikum er blitt tallrikt hos oss siden krigen.”)

78. Harriet Clayhills, “Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 18

79. The article also showed some Figgjo bowls designed by Hermann Bongard.

80. Johannessen, *op.cit.* p 20-35

81. Harriet Clayhills, “PLUS i Fredrikstad og for mange” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 28-31



Figure 11–7: Plate, teapot and cream jug from the *Benta* service (earthenware) Figgjo, 1958. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Here presented in *Bonytt* by the designer and his daughter Benta. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 19, 1959)

accused the designers of yielding to affectation and mannerism, and claimed that contemporary Norwegian furniture was “barely useful because it is too *special*. Forcedly the designers continuously seek new shapes... [F]urniture shall not be sculpture.”⁸² According to Norberg-Schulz, design (of furniture and other items intended for use in buildings) should be subordinate to the great art of architecture, and he believed the new furniture to violate this relation by being too elaborate and expressionist. This attitude resembles the criticism which had earlier been raised against Finn Juhl’s furniture both by some Danish commentators and by Odd Brochmann, but also the commotion caused by the British architectural critic and historian Reyner Banham when he in the spring of 1959 accused Italian architecture and design of committing *Neo-Liberty*.⁸³

Jens von der Lippe’s review of the ceramics exhibited at the decade’s last autumnal exhibition was less aggressive and condemnatory than his young colleague’s critique of the furniture. Although he as well detected tendencies of misunderstood perfectionism

82. Christian Norberg-Schulz, “Møbelaffekteri” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 210 (“lite brukbare fordi de er for spesielle. Krampaktig søker designerne stadig nye linjeføringer... [M]øbler skal ikke være skulptur.”)

83. Reyner Banham, “Neo-Liberty: The Italian Retreat from Modern Architecture” in *Architectural Review* April, 1959, p 235. See also: Nigel Whiteley, *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2002) p 17-22

and over-refinement—which he attributed to a fear of not being able to follow up the appreciation currently perceived by Norwegian designers—his attitude was rather that of encouragement and challenge. He called for greater imagination and boldness, so that the designers would come up with genuinely new ideas. How radically von der Lippe’s appeal should be interpreted is less evident, because the illustrations accompanying the review do not indicate any design revolution. One of the products he pointed out was a Figgjo mocha service designed by Ragnar Grimsrud which he described as an example of “bold and unconventional forms”—certainly a feather in Figgjo’s cap, but hardly revolutionary design [Figure 11-8].⁸⁴ It was also shown at the *XII Triennale di Milano* in

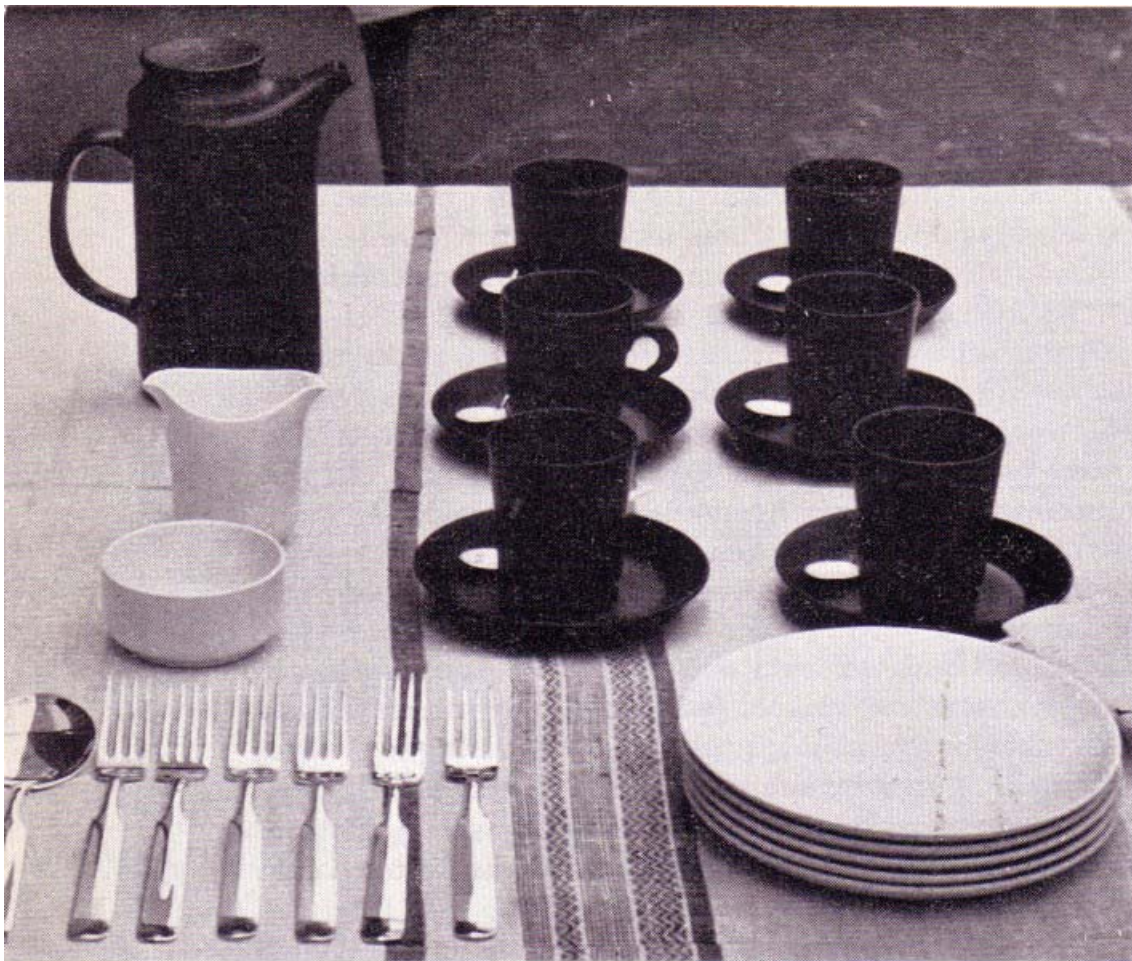


Figure 11–8: Mocha service (earthenware) Figgjo, 1959. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 19, 1959)

1960.

This mocha service also makes for a suitable closing remark. If we consider the occasions throughout the 1950s where Figgjo products made their way into higher

84. Jens von der Lippe, “De engstelige i nord og de modige i syd” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 208 (caption) (“...dristige og ukonvensjonelle former”)

circles by being approved by the applied art association's jury or committee, such as the *X* and *XII Triennale di Milano* and the 1959 autumnal exhibition—and most probably also at *Design in Scandinavia* and *H 55*—there is a striking and revealing conformity to the selected products: Apart from the prescriptive simple, non-intrusive shapes and no decor except material-based lined reliefs, these products [Figure 10-6 and 11-8] were characterized by two things—they had no colours (only available in black and white), and they were no big sellers. However, on less ceremonious occasions, such as in *Bonytt* articles (and on exhibitions organized by the local Stavanger chapter of the association), Figgjo's more popular and commercially viable—but still “modern”—products such as the *Grete*, *Sissel* and *Benta* services were accepted and appreciated. In line with this tendency, Figgjo's *Sissel* service was presented in a 1957 booklet on Norwegian design intended for promotion abroad, compiled by Ferdinand Aars, secretary-general of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), and published in co-operation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁸⁵

11.7 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to trace the Norwegian design community's increased awareness and acknowledgment of the particular requirements and conditions of design within the context of commercial industry and market economy in the 1950s. First we saw how there seemed to develop a greater comprehension of the realities of actual industrial enterprises and that a certain degree of compromise and pragmatism did not necessarily mean acquiescence, defeat or betrayal.

The establishment of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in 1955 also represented an increased concern for design as a problem-solving activity inseparable from product development within industry. The mid-section of this chapter explored how this event marked the beginning of a fragmentation process in the Norwegian design community, marking out the gap that was forming between handicraft and industrial design.

For a long time, the purely aesthetic aspects of modernist design ideals had been cloaked in narratives of rationality and notions of functionalism. It is thus interesting to note, as this chapter has shown, that in the 1950s, it became possible to discuss aesthetics as a quality in its own right also when talking about modern design. Moreover, as modern design became more and more popular with the broader public, this tendency revealed a greater attention among the design elite to the subtler nuances in the aesthetic properties of modern design, disclosing the distinctive power of the modernist aesthetic. But, as the last section of this chapter has shown, there were also voices warning against excessive refinement and subtleties, trying instead to promote the unaffected.

85. Ferdinand Aars, *Arts and Crafts—Industrial Design in Norway* (Oslo: Dreyers forlag & The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of Cultural Relations, 1957) p 35

Overall, the discussions in this chapter have revealed some of the more pronounced examples of *modern transformed*. We have seen how design ideological conventions were renegotiated and reframed in order to better accommodate a design field and society in rapid transformation. Established modernist truisms were challenged and (at least partially) revised. These readjustments did not come easy, and required considerable translation work, but—as we shall see later—they seem not to have been profound enough to still the waters for long.

We shall now leave the ideological debates in the Norwegian design community and the discussions in *Bonytt* for a while, and return to Figgjo and explore how the company after its transformation into an earthenware factory found their place in the realm of Norwegian industry and design practice in the 1950s. As we shall see, in their way of *negotiating design networks*, Figgjo had to tackle a lot of *translations on the table*.

Section B:

Translations on the table

12 The formation of a factory: Figgjo's transition to industrial earthenware production

12.1 Introduction

Moving from the *translations on the agenda* of the Norwegian design community in the 1950s, we shall now turn to the *translations on the table* in the formative phase of Figgjo as an earthenware factory and site of design strategy and design practice in the same period. What did the company's modernisation and industrialisation of ceramic tableware production entail? How should new materials, new men and new machines be aligned in an earthenware factory? What kind of design strategy would best serve a fledgling manufacturer heavily reliant on the small domestic market? This chapter will discuss the formation of a factory, exploring at some length the comprehensive expansion and transformation of the enterprise in its first decade as a modern industrial company.

The chapter starts out by outlining Figgjo's transformation from hen house handicraft to fordist factory. Tracing the substantial growth in workforce, manufacturing facilities and production volume, this section will demonstrate how Figgjo worked hard to establish a more rationalized production flow and logistics and a more efficient manufacturing system based on systematic methods and scientific ideals.

The mid-section of this chapter is an excursion into the very heart of Figgjo's new-found identity as a fordist factory; the material technology, production processes and manufacturing systems forming the base of their entire operation. These interactions of materials, men and machines are essential to the understanding of design strategies and practices in this industry.

The last section of this chapter discusses how the new earthenware factory tried to position itself in the peculiar marketplace for consumer goods in 1950s' Norway through an analysis of the company's design strategy and management. The primary challenge was that tariff barriers and structural disparities made it difficult to establish viable exports, resulting in dependence on a small and heterogeneous domestic market. Figgjo's chosen solution would be to develop a design strategy best described as an effort to offer "something for everyone".

12.2 From hen house handicraft to fordist factory

Much of the expansion of the Figgjo industrial plant took place before the change from pottery to earthenware was completed. As we have seen earlier, the activities, facilities and output during the war years were extremely modest. For example, the number of employees, despite being doubled since the start-up, the staff still counted no more than

25 persons in 1945.¹ In 1947, most of the new plant—the main factory buildings and the first tunnel kiln—was completed, although construction work continued into the early fifties with the inauguration of the second tunnel kiln in 1951 and warehouse expansions resulting in a total plant floorage of 10.000 square metres. Figgjo's transition to earthenware factory was reported in *Bonytt* under the heading “Good news for the housewives”, welcoming additional production of “these things we actually have lacked for many years”.² Some months later, Figgjo placed a simple advertisement in *Bonytt* consisting of a drawing of the factory [Figure 12-1] over a copy that simply read: “Production of domestic earthenware—Figgjo Fajanse A-S”.³ This was Figgjo's second ever advertisement in *Bonytt*.

Perhaps the most illustrative indicator of the vast expansion rate is the size of the workforce. In 1947 the staff counted approximately 65 persons—a number which was doubled only a year later.⁴ In 1950, the first complete business year of the earthenware factory, 180 persons were on the payroll.⁵ This already substantial growth did not, however, stop here when the new industrial plant was up and running—it continued throughout the 1950s, reaching 250 employees in 1954 and peaking at about 350 in 1956.⁶

The expansion of plant size and workforce had, of course, one goal: increased production volume. While an output of ca. two million units pr. year in 1950 was considered substantial, the volume grew rapidly, passing seven million units pr. year in 1954 and reaching ten million in 1956.⁷ So, while the number of employees had doubled during those six years, the production volume had quintupled. General manager and design manager Ragnar Grimsrud asserted that the first year of earthenware production had been satisfactory much due to an already qualified staff.⁸ Still, the growth rate which followed throughout the 1950s indicates a more skilled and experienced workforce, a more rationalized production flow and logistics, and a more efficient manufacturing system.

Science, organization theory, technology and mechanization are essential parameters in this development. As mentioned earlier, the tunnel kilns were built on site supervised by machinery manufacturer C.H. Evensen in Fredrikstad. Most of the production machinery, on the other hand, had to be imported, something which was anything but unproblematic in the Norway of the late 1940s and early 1950s due to very strict regulations and restrictions on all foreign trade. The key issue was a precarious shortage of foreign currencies. Figgjo successfully argued that their future production would

1. N.N., “En avskjedsdag ved Figgjo Fajanse” in *Sandnesposten*, 30.12.1954

2. Liv Schjødt, “Gledelig nytt for husmødrene, Figgjo Fabrikker setter i gang fajanseproduksjon” in *Bonytt*, No. 4, 1949, p xii (“Disse ting har vi faktisk manglet i mange år”)

3. *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1949, p xvi (“Produksjon av husholdningsfajanse—Figgjo Fajanse A-S”)

4. N.N., “Keramikkfabrikken på Figgjo skal lage 400.000 kg. fajanse pr. år” in unknown newspaper, 1947 (date and name of the paper left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive)

5. Mette Tellander, “Fra råstoffer til kopper og tallerkener” in *Aftenposten*, 18.11.1950

6. N.N., “Kopper, mugger og tallerkener på løpende bånd” in *Christiansands Tidende*, 21.05.1954 and N.N., “25 minutter fra leire til ferdig kopp” in *Stavangeren*, 29.09.1956

7. Tellander, *op.cit.*, N.N., “Kopper, mugger og tallerkener på løpende bånd” in *Christiansands Tidende*, 21.05.1954 and N.N., “25 minutter fra leire til ferdig kopp” in *Stavangeren*, 29.09.1956

8. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in Tellander, *op.cit.*

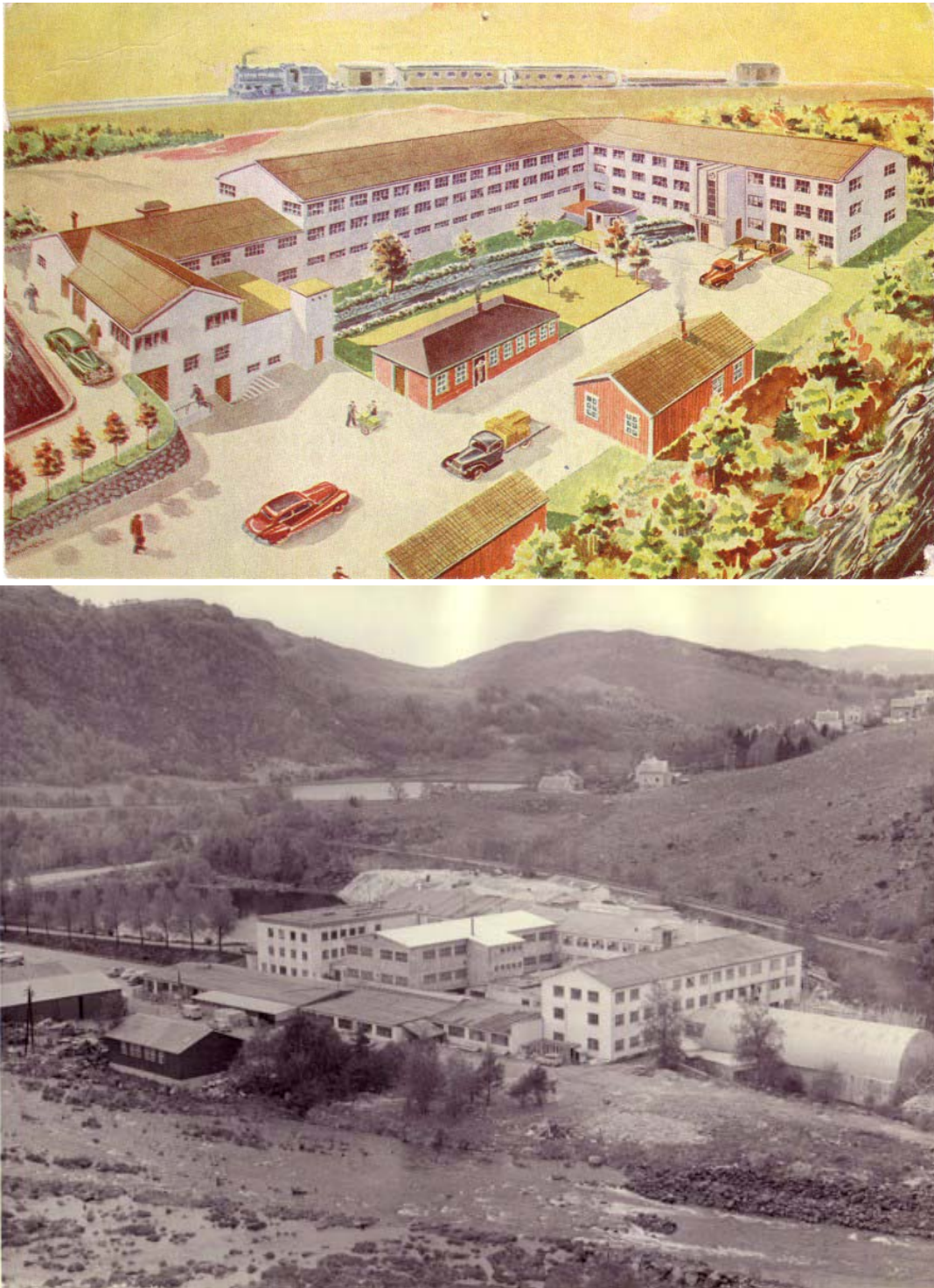


Figure 12–1: Top: Postcard from 1949 depicting the new Figgjo earthenware factory. Note the striking contrasts of the imagery: The surrounding nature and the river flowing through the plant alluding naturalness, familiarity and place identity. The stretch cars in bright, shiny colours and streamline design symbolize, aided by the train passing in the background, modernity, prosperity and progress. This drawing was also used in an advertisement in *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1949, announcing Figgjo's establishment as an earthenware factory. Bottom: An non-staged photograph of the same factory (1960s) does not have the same allure. (Postcard and photo from Figgjo archive)

reduce the amount of currency needed for import of tableware, and so they were given import licence and foreign currency to buy production machinery.⁹ This example demonstrates with extraordinary clarity how direct and palpable the interventions of political actors can be in specific settings otherwise regarded as a sphere of business, technology and design.

Another feature of the new, industrialized business paradigm at Figgjo was the scientification of the production. The distance from the pottery workshop to the earthenware factory did not lay only in the change of materials and product types, division of labour, mechanization of manufacturing sequences, and scale of production volume—it was perhaps greatest, at least symbolically, in the establishment of an in-house laboratory. When the national newspaper *Aftenposten* had visited Figgjo's new factory in 1950, the journalist reported in great awe:

At the Figgjo factory, the laboratory is considered almost the most important. It is large and well-equipped with every imaginable instrument, and two chemists test product samples on every stage and experiment all day long with colours and mixtures in order to, if possible, find something even better than what is manufactured now.¹⁰

One might be tempted to suspect the journalist had somewhat of a lab coat fetish or something, had it not been for the fact that this sort of prostrate admiration for anything scientific—at least when it was associated with domestic industry and prospects of prosperity—was more common than not in the popular sphere of the 1950s. An expression of the same phenomenon is the great respect and deep fascination with which the media—especially the local newspapers—presented Figgjo's technical consultant:

Figgjo Fajanse has its well-equipped laboratory, headed by chemical and ceramic engineers. But the company has also engaged one of the leading experts in England, consulting ceramic engineer *Stanley Hind*. He has been employed in his native country by companies with world famous names like Wedgwood and Doulton, in addition to numerous others and by companies in France, Holland and Israel.¹¹

That Figgjo, new to the business, looked to England for technical expertise on earthenware production is not at all strange, given the long-standing traditions this industry has there [Figure 12-2].¹² Figgjo's neighbour and competitor Stavangerflint, who

9. N.N., "Fajanseproduksjonen blir en av fylkets viktigste industrier" in one of the local newspapers, 1948 (date and name of the paper left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive)

10. Tellander, *op.cit.* ("Ved Figgjofabrikken blir laboratoriet ansett som nesten det viktigste. Det er stort og velutstyrt med alle mulige hjelpemidler, og to kjemikere tar prøver av varene på alle stadier og eksperimenterer hele dagen med farger og blandinger for om mulig å komme fram til noe som er enda bedre enn det som nu produseres.")

11. Bj. G., "Vår keramikkindustri på rask fremmarsj" in *Stavangeren*, 29.03.1952 ("Figgjo Fajanse har sitt velutstyrte laboratorium, ledet av kemi- og keramikk-ingeniører. Men bedriften har også knyttet til seg en av de fremste fagmenn i England, consulting ceramic engineer *Stanley Hind*. Han har vært nyttet i hjemlandet av firmaer som Wedgwood og Doulton, foruten av en rekke andre og av bedrifter i Frankrike, Holland og Israel.")

12. For a fascinating account of the early industrialization of earthenware production and specialization of design at Wedgwood in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, see Adrian Forty, *Objects and Desire—Design and Society since 1750* (London & New York: Thames & Hudson, 1986) p 17-41



Figure 12–2: Figgjo's British technical consultant Stanley Hind (in the middle, holding the plate) photographed at a meeting with the company management during one of his frequent visits. Ragnar Grimsrud is number two from the right, in the white coat. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

went into business in 1949, also engaged a British technical consultant. The local press presented this one even more adoringly:

William H. Webb O.B.I., F.R.I.C., M.I. Chem E., D. Sc. is one of Great Britain's most celebrated experts in the field of earthenware. All the letters following the name are almost impossible to comprehend...¹³

The combination of English names and impressive English titles made at least the press portray them as demigods of science, technology, culture, refinement and everything that is good in the world, coming to the rescue for naive, inexperienced Norwegian companies—and according to the newspapers, the English experts were proud to collaborate with such fine, hard-working manufacturers and claimed that the Norwegian products had already reached the same level of technical quality as English products.¹⁴

13. N.N., "Engelsk fajanse-ekspert roser Stavanger-flinten" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 20.06.1952 ("William H. Webb O.B.I., F.R.I.C., M.I. Chem E, D. Sc. er en av Storbritannias mest kjente eksperter på området fajanse. Alle bokstavene etter navnet er det nesten uråd å holde greie på...") Both Stanley Hind and William Webb held doctorates in chemistry, and both of them were based in Stoke-on-Trent—the hub of British earthenware industry. The contact with British ceramic expertise also led Figgjo to send decor design manager Rolf Frøyland to Stoke-on-Trent for a year in 1958 for further education at the Stoke-on-Trent College of Art: Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006

14. Magnus Torgersen, "Vent med dansen til vi har tatt av bordet" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 14.11.1953

The laboratory is perhaps the ultimate symbol of scientific exactness, intended to facilitate repetitive accuracy and predictable production systems. Its equivalent in the sphere of organization theory, logistics and management would be work measurement and time studies. Even though almost four decades and two world wars had come and gone since Frederic W. Taylor in 1911 published his seminal book *Principles of Scientific Management*, the doctrine—better known as *Taylorism*—still dominated industrial management in post-war Norway. Taylorism had, hand in hand with *Fordism*, swooped across Europe in triumphal progress already in the 1920s, and found fertile soil especially in the Soviet Union and Germany.¹⁵ The production ideology of Taylor and Henry Ford moved on some sort of a meta level, something which made them rise above otherwise incommensurable ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, fascism and communism. They were all equally enthused by the idea of the modern factory.¹⁶ But the ideas of scientific management did not only appeal to managers and engineers; several of the pioneers of modernist design and architecture, like Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier were heavily influenced by both Taylor and Ford.¹⁷

It is perhaps no wonder, then, that these ideas guided both Ragnar Grimsrud and the rest of the Figgjo management in their quest to build a modern, rational, efficient industrial company. Since the inauguration of the earthenware factory in 1949 and well into the 1950s, Figgjo spent large sums on work measurement and time studies. A special group consisting of five persons was formed to undertake these studies.¹⁸ Considering that the company in 1953 had approximately 250 employees, this shows that rationalization of the company was given high priority, and that Taylorist methods were still seen as the most relevant and appropriate means to this end. The work study department (*arbeidsstudieavdelingen*) was operative throughout the fifties, and extended their activities to include production method analysis as well as time-and-motion studies.¹⁹

The organization of the company was also subject to scientification and rationalization. The Federation of Norwegian Industries' Bureau of Rationalization Ltd. (Industriforbundets rationaliseringskontor A/S—IRAS) was commissioned to undertake an analysis of the functions and structural organization of the entire company and propose measures and re-organizations which could lead to improved efficiency and rationality both in production and management. The report reveals that the IRAS'

15. Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis—A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm, 1870-1970* (New York: Viking, 1989) p 249-294. This is, of course, a rather crude and somewhat unjust simplification. The dissemination of these American ideas was by no means unisonous throughout Europe. For a nuanced discussion of the French and German appropriation of Taylorism and Fordism, see: Kjetil Jacobsen, Ketil G. Andersen, Tor Halvorsen and Sissel Myklebust, "Engineering Cultures: European Appropriations of Americanism" in Mikael Hård and Andrew Jamison (eds.), *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology—Discourses on Modernity, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998) p 101-127. Here it is argued, for instance, that in Germany, "*Taylorismus* became a negative term in the 1920s, while *Fordismus* generally had positive connotations." (p 123)

16. Håkon W. Andersen, "Taylor, Ford og den rasjonelle fabrikken" in Håkon W. Andersen, Terje Borgersen, Thomas Brandt, Knut Ove Eliassen, Ola Svein Stugu and Audun Øfsti (eds.), *Fabrikken* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2004) p 141-142

17. Hughes, *op.cit.* p 309-324

18. Magnus Torgersen, "Vent med dansen til vi har tatt av bordet" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 14.11.1953

19. Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 07.09.1959 (Figgjo archive)

industrial engineers responsible for the Figgjo analysis, Jens Amtrup and Erling Grende, knew their Taylor by heart: their suggestions are saturated with ideas of theorization, scientification, specialization and professionalization of all functions from kiln operators to sales manager, and profuse with rationalist diagrammatic re-interpretations of the organization.²⁰

Both the laboratory and the time studies should be understood as symbols of Figgjo's own corporate identity being at this stage firmly established as an industrial company. Their self-perception, but also the mediated public image, was clearly associated with the traditions of science, business management, rationality, technology, etc. Such concepts belonged to the world of modern industry and business, and helped distance Figgjo from their modest start and from the widespread public romanticism of arts and crafts. Like Ragnar Grimsrud put it: "In the past, the ceramic industry practised much which reminded of magic. Modern research has now x-rayed the problem."²¹ Even when it came to marketing strategies, Figgjo relied on scientific and rationalist methods to serve as basis for their actions: The Gallup poll company Norsk Gallup Institutt A/S was hired to survey market potential and brand awareness among consumers by means of statistical analysis.²²

But despite having positioned themselves unambiguously within the realm of industry, romanticist notions struck Figgjo as well from time to time.²³ Although industrial mass-production generated much fascination in the 1950s, there seems to have been a need to find threads connecting this brave, new world with the traditional, familiar society. This motive is extremely explicit in the socialist journalist Jostein Nyhamar's account of the Rogaland industrial earthenware adventure:

Basically, the production process is the same today as it was thousands of years ago, only tremendously more rational and industrialized. The production has been standardized in an adequate assortment of form types, and the machines have replaced the human hands. The electric kiln has taken over for the bonfire, and while the potters of the antiquity poured their joy of form into each and every object, automatic turnery machines now make a plate in a couple of seconds. But one thing is common for the old craftsmen and those who work with the clay today: the material has the same ability to spellbind those who get in touch with it. The malleable clay, so full of possibilities, so willing to be shaped according to Man's desire, gives a creative zest which not even a very advanced mechanization has been able to fully remove.²⁴

Nyhamar here reveals a quite peculiar and rare combination: First, he is, like most of his colleague were, impressed by the rationalization offered by industrial production and paints a picture of technology as omnipotent. But then he lapses into some lofty

20. Jens Amtrup and Erling Grende, *Organisatoriske forundersøkelser ved Figgjo Fajanse A/S* (Report from Industriforbundets rationaliseringskontor A/S, 12.08.1958—Figgjo archive)

21. Ragnar Grimsrud, *Flintvare* (Internal memo, undated—Figgjo archive) ("I tidligere tider praktiserte den keramiske industri mye som minnet om magi. Moderne forskning har nå gjennomstrålet problemet.")

22. *Gallups varemerkeindeks*, Vol. 11, November 1956, Norsk Gallup Institutt A/S (Figgjo archive)

23. The American historian Ruth Schwartz Cowan has argued that even the idea of scientific management itself to a certain extent can be considered romanticist: Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *A Social History of American Technology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 211-213

glorifications of the creative hand and the magic of the material. He thus seems to be both an industrial romantic *and* a crafts romantic—all rolled into one. Romanticism of any kind aside, let us now enter the door opened by Nyhamar and see for ourselves what happened inside the new factory halls at Figgjo.

12.3 Materials, Man, Machine

All the media reports from the new earthenware factories share the duality expressed in Nyhamar's account: the emphasis on the modern, rational, mechanized, industrial nature of the production, but also the insistence on the continuity with age-old traditions in terms of materials. As we have seen, there are many aspects of the production and management systems which can be interpreted as supporting the first half of this image. The latter part of this popular notion, on the other hand, is certainly no more than partially true. Also when it came to materials, massive changes were made in the transition from pottery workshop to earthenware factory.

As shown earlier, the pottery workshop exploited locally extracted blue clay for its products. Blue clay pottery is, however, a very porous and brittle material, and thus not suited for large-scale industrial manufacture of affordable and utilitarian tableware. The latter was what the Norwegian post-war market so feverishly demanded and the Figgjo entrepreneurs set out to supply the modern home with. Since porcelain was relatively expensive, the reasonable choice was earthenware—more specifically the type of earthenware traditionally produced in England which was regarded as the variety of highest quality. Products made from this material are baked at a considerably higher temperature than blue clay pottery (1100-1200 and 800-1000 degrees centigrade respectively) and the material becomes far more dense and much stronger, also because of large proportions of quartz added to the mass.²⁵ This is why earthenware is so well-suited for tableware, especially services for everyday use.

This material, or rather class of materials, is composed of several ingredients, including various types of clay. But while the clay which can be found in Rogaland and other parts of Norway is perfectly suitable for low-temperature baked pottery, it can not be used in earthenware production due to its unsatisfactory compound, e.g. an excessive iron content (which is what gives blue clay pottery its characteristic red colour when baked). So, in order to manufacture earthenware, other types of clay were required. The

24. Jostein Nyhamar, "Titusener nye kopper!" in unknown newspaper, ca. 1954 (date and name of the paper left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive) ("I sine grunntrekk er produksjonsprosessen den samme i dag som for tusener av år siden, bare uhyre mer rasjonell og industrialisert. Produksjonen er blitt standardisert i et passende utvalg av formtyper, og maskinene har erstattet menneskehendene. Den elektriske ovnen har tatt over for bålet, og mens oldtidens pottemakerne øste ut sin formglede i hver enkelt gjenstand, lager nå automatiske dreiemaskiner en tallerken i løpet av et par sekunder. Men en ting er felles for de gamle håndverkerne og dem som arbeider med leiren i våre dager: materialet har den samme evnen til å tryllebinde [sic] dem som kommer i berøring med det. Den føyelige leiren, så full av muligheter, så villig til å la seg forme etter menneskenes vilje, gir en skaperglede som selv ikke en høyt oppdrevet mekanisering har vært i stand til å ta helt bort.")

25. Liv Schjødt, *God form er best i bruk* (Oslo: NKL forlaget, 1956) p 13-14

composition of the mass—the material—needed for the new, industrial production of earthenware at Figgjo had become such a complex process that even the company newsletter ran several articles by the responsible specialists explaining it.

Clay is an organic material, and thus not a homogeneous substance. It is a natural blend of numerous different clay minerals. The purest and most uniform are the kaolins, or china clay, which are naturally white or slightly palish and normally extracted from rock deposits. The most blended and impure types applied are ball clays, which are sedimentary. The main features of the ball clay are its plasticity and its supply of feldspar. But due to the heterogeneous character and varying quality of the ball clay, Figgjo used several different ball clays in their mass, blended according to their unique compositions and structures in order to obtain a mass with as constant and optimal qualities as possible. The kaolin is not as plastic as ball clay, but its purity and mineral compound makes it bake white—a distinguishing feature of earthenware, as opposed to traditional blue clay which bakes red. And while the blue clay used in the pottery production were easily available locally, both the kaolin and the ball clays needed for earthenware production had to be imported from England.²⁶

What really lends the strength and resilience to high quality earthenware, though, is the quartz and feldspar added to the mass. The types, qualities and quantities of these additives are essential to the result, and the chemists, engineers and technicians at Figgjo spent a lot of time and effort experimenting with this before finding a satisfactory solution. After trying out many types of pure quartz and feldspar which did not meet the requirements, they discovered a compound mineral from a local quarry which contained just the desired qualities and quantities of quartz and feldspar in the appropriate relation. This quartz made up about 50% of Figgjo's earthenware mass. In addition to these main ingredients, the earthenware mass developed at Figgjo also consisted of smaller amounts of lime, dolomite and crushed bisque (semi-finished product scrapped after the first baking and fed back into the preparation of the mass).²⁷

At the new Figgjo factory, a special department in charge of the preparation of the mass was set up; the mass house (*massehuset*). The work done here can in some ways be said to resemble that of a bakery; preparing and mixing the “dough”. The various types of ball clay came in compact, massive blocks. These were mixed with water, turning it into a soup-like consistency. Water was also added to the two types of kaolin, which came in powder, resulting in a white soup. The quartz rocks went through a stone crusher and a rolling mill reducing them to gravel. The quartz gravel was then poured into mills filled with flint pellets and ground into powder, and blended with ground scrap bisque and some of the smaller ingredients and water into a creamy quartz soup.

When the blends of ball clay, kaolin, quartz and bisque were all tested and separately found to meet the various requirements, they were mixed according to specific relations resulting in the finished compound. The compound soup was then sent over a magnet extracting ferrous particles which would otherwise create black dots in the material. The last stage was to remove excess water, turning the soup into a mass of manageable

26. Ib Kjølens, “Massens sammensetning” in *Flintpratzen* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 1, No. 3, 1956, p 8-10

27. *Ibid.*

consistency. This was done by means of a filter press which gave the mass the correct consistency and portioned it into “filter cakes”. A part of these were then taken to the foundry, while the mass intended for turnery had to go through yet another process. In order to remove any air bubbles from the mass, it was sent through a vacuum mill, which also gave it its final, cylindric shape.²⁸ There was only a few percent difference in the moisture content in the foundry clay and the turnery clay, but it was still vital for the material's properties.²⁹

As we can see, the processes connected to the raw materials used by the Figgjo earthenware factory were anything but simple and obvious, and a far cry from the romantic notion of the ceramic studio and its autarkic, autonomous artisan-craftsman. One can safely say that the materials—the clays and minerals—were wilful and unreliable actors which constantly had to be supervised, controlled, catered to, manipulated and negotiated with in order to make them act and perform as desired by other actors in the system/network/situation.

When asked to address the design community and other interested laymen in the columns of *Bonytt*, Figgjo's design manager and general manager Ragnar Grimsrud carefully stressed both the distance but also the continuity from the pottery workshop to the earthenware factory in terms of manufacturing methods and technology:

The potter's wheel is no longer used in the factories, but its rotating motion is still the major design principle—if one strives for economic production. That is why the things we eat off and drink from are round. Even oval platters are formed by rotation. The round form is thus technically motivated, also insofar as it most easily neutralizes internal material stress. By founding with liquid mass one can make irregular forms. But it is normally too expensive a process, and is only used where turnery is inadequate... We can thus make different, but not better solutions.³⁰

All products, whether made by foundry or turnery, were fashioned by means of plaster moulds. Non-round objects, like jugs, pots, etc., were made by casting, which required moulds. Round objects, like plates and cups, were made by turnery machines, but even these required moulds by which the machines could shape the products. It was the technical and physical restraints connected with this activity—constructing moulds that would perform satisfactorily in the production runs—which made perhaps the biggest impact on design possibilities, given that manufacturability would always be at the top of the design specification list of any product development project.³¹

Models and moulds were made in plaster. The porosity of the plaster is essential to the production, especially to the casting, because it draws moisture from the clay in the

28. Nils Holte, “Om massetilberedningen” in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 1, No. 2, 1956, p 3-5

29. Ib Kjølson, “Våre råstoffer” in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 1, No. 4, 1956, p 3

30. Ragnar Grimsrud, “Produsenten har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 187 (“Pottemakerskiven blir ikke brukt mer i fabrikkene, men dens roterende bevegelse er fremdeles det store prinsipp i formingen—hvis en søker økonomisk produksjon. Derfor er sakene vi spiser på og drikker av runde. Selv de ovale fat er formet under rotasjon. Den runde form er altså teknisk begrunnet, også derved at den gir lettest utligning av spenninger i godset Ved støpning med flytende masse kan en lage irregulære former. MEN det blir vanligvis en for dyr prosess og brukes bare hvor dreining kommer til kort... Vi kan lage andre, men ikke bedre løsninger.”)

31. Jørg Løve Nielsen, “Gipsen” in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 2, No. 1, 1957, p 6

moulds. But plaster also has a very high wear rate. The moulds lasted maximum two weeks, something which made it necessary constantly to produce new ones.³² The plaster workshop was thus a busy part of the factory, responsible for fashioning models based on new designs, constructing moulds from these and keeping the foundry and turnery with a steady supply of moulds [Figure 12-3].³³



Figure 12–3: Designer Olav Joa making a mould for a cup on the turnery wheel in the plaster workshop. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

The “filter cakes” of clay composed for the non-round products were then brought to the foundry where it was diluted in water and alkali silicate, and poured into the assembled plaster moulds.³⁴ And this is where the porous plaster really acted its part: The mould walls absorbed moisture from the clay mass, and after a short while, a membrane of appropriate thickness would solidify along the plaster walls. The surplus mass would then be poured out, the moulds opened/disassembled, and the jugs, pots or whatever products the batch might contain were sent to desiccation [Figure 12-4].³⁵ Foundry production was slower and more labour intensive than turnery, and thus more expensive. It was therefore, as shown above, only used for products which were impossible to manufacture by turnery. Still, its inevitable labour intensity was sought reduced to a minimum by means of elaborate plans for rationalization and mechanization.³⁶

The vacuum ground clay rods found their way to the turnery, where all round objects like plates and cups got their shape. The clay mass was the raw material, and the moulds

32. N.N., “Fra leire og kvarts til skinnende flint” in *Adresseavisen*, 11.06.1953

33. Nielsen, *op.cit.*

34. Kvammen and Norland, “Støperiet” in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 2, No. 3-4, 1957, p 21

35. N.N., “Fra råleire til middagservice” in *Dagen*, 23.04.1951

36. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 9/12 1953 (Figgjo archive)



Figure 12–4: A batch of jugs being completed in the foundry. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

gave the products form. The turnery and spraying department was the factory's largest unit, employing 85 persons in 1957. Mechanization of the production run in the turnery had become quite advanced at this stage. The department's mechanical equipment included e.g. automatic turnery machines, drying machines, polishing machines, sprayers and spray booths (ca. 2/3 of the production volume was at this time given a sprayed finish of coloured clay mass—a design feature developed specially at Figgjo and which became a hallmark of their 1950s products).

Turnery production can be divided into two varieties, separated according to product category. Flatware, like plates in all sizes, were made by “top turnery” (“*overdreining*”) which meant that a chunk of clay mass was slapped onto a mould in the inverse shape of the plate's top side. The running shoe of the turnery machine then formed the underside of the plate [Figure 12-5]. Hollow products, like cups and bowls, were made by “in turnery” (“*inndreining*”) which meant that a chunk of clay mass was slapped in the bottom of a mould in the inverse shape of the object's exterior. The running shoe of the turnery machine then pulled the clay mass up along the sides of the mould and shaped the inside of the product.³⁷

As shown above, many measures were taken to modernize and rationalize the production at Figgjo, including laboratory experiments and time studies as well as mechanization of the production. Even when it came to production flow, the taylorist methods of work measurement were paired with fordist logistics. Head of the turnery and spraying department, Alf Stafnes, explained the latter system's implementation and implications in his world:

37. A. Stafnes, “Dreieriet” in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 2, No. 2, 1957, p 10



Figure 12–5: Plates under production by “top turnery” (“overdreining”). A plaster mould gives shape to the top side, while the running shoe forms the underside. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

For the production to run rationally, it is divided into simple operations. The products wander from link to link in the chain; either directly or interrupted by store-and-forward stations between the individual links. The operators then perform their specific task until the artefact is finished and leaves the turnery on its journey onwards through the factory... [A] sprayed cup (these are made in large numbers) must pass 13 different links or operations before the turnery is done with it. And that is not counting several transports and storages. A plate is to be handled six places before it is goes to the next department.³⁸

But in the 1950s, the unconditional faith in technology, mechanization and automatization as the saviour of modern society was in rapid decline—even among the most optimistically and progressively disposed people. Even the most energetic advocates of avant-garde culture and modernist ideas could now at the same time express pessimism of the industrial development.³⁹ This paradox was perhaps most explicit in a

38. *Ibid.* (“For at produksjonen skal kunne gå rasjonelt er den delt opp i enkle operasjoner. Artiklene vandrer da fra ledd til ledd i kjeden; enten direkte eller med mellomlager mellom de enkelte ledd. Operatørene gjør da sitt bestemte arbeide til gjenstanden er ferdig og forlater dreieriet på sin ferd videre gjennom fabrikk... [E]n sprøytet kopp (disse lages jo i store mengder) må gjennom 13 forskjellige ledd eller operasjoner før dreieriet er ferdig med den. Til dette kommer så flere transporter og mellomlagringer. En tallerken skal behandles seks steder før den går til neste avdeling.”)

1948 book by “official” chronicler of modernist architecture and secretary of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), Sigfried Giedion, entitled *Mechanization Takes Command*.⁴⁰ Much like his British counterpart Nikolaus Pevsner had done in his 1936 *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*,⁴¹ Giedion seeks to establish historical justification for the ideas of the Modern Movement—although his approach was typological rather than stylistic, and also far less biased towards personality cult. Giedion's book, however, can also be read as expressing an anxiety that the mechanization of the production of commodities perhaps now was slipping out of human control and becoming dangerously amoral.⁴² With rationalized mechanization swirling between demonism and deity, one could do with a stabilizing element—something which could help domesticate the image of mechanized production. It is thus no wonder that the industrial rationalizers at Figgjo saw to it that the skilled and diligent human being was revalued within the framework of a highly mechanized production:

The best people always deliver the finest work—the best result. That can be said regardless of the technical aids which is a big problem complex in its own right. The technical side of the matter must be paid the greatest attention, but a good technical apparatus is of little use if we who operate it do not continuously improve ourselves. Technology is, after all, just an aid to Man, because in the end it is he who decide the factory's ability to compete and thus survive.⁴³

No matter how the relations and power structures between Man and machine were portrayed, the fact remains that their interaction works according to complex sets of affordances and constraints. Continuing our investigation of the production run at the Figgjo earthenware factory, we are now faced with the potentially most demonic and infernal of all the enrolled mechanical (non-human) actors; the kilns.

As mentioned above, the construction of the first tunnel kiln had commenced already in 1944, and was completed in 1946. It's performance had thus been tested thoroughly in the pottery production during the transformation of the plant into an earthenware factory. But a rational, effective production run required another tunnel kiln, because the products had to go through two different baking processes. So, even though the earthenware production began in 1949, it was not until the completion of the second tunnel kiln in 1951 that the production volume gained any significant momentum. The

39. Thomas P. Hughes, *Human-Built World—How to think about technology and culture* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004) p 134-136

40. Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command—a contribution to anonymous history* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948)

41. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of the modern movement—from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936)

42. This ambiguity is evident when Giedion in the conclusion writes that “No doubt mechanization can help eliminate slave labor and achieve better standards of living. Nevertheless, in the future it may have to be checked in some way so as to allow a more independent way of living.”: Giedion, *op.cit.* p 715

43. Stafsnes, *op.cit.* p 11 (“De flinkeste folk leverer alltid fineste arbeide—det beste resultat. Dette kan en si uten å ta hensyn til de tekniske hjelpeapparater som jo er et stort problemkompleks i seg selv. Den tekniske side av saken må ofres største oppmerksomhet, men det hjelper likevel lite med et godt teknisk apparat om ikke vi som bruker det stadig forbedrer oss selv. Teknikken er tross alt bare et hjelpemiddel for menneskene, for til syvende og sist er det dem som bestemmer om fabrikken skal være konkurransedyktig og dermed levedyktig.”)

simple fact that the workforce grew from 175 to 250 and the production volume was doubled in the course of 1951 alone can illustrate the impetus and authority of the second tunnel kiln.⁴⁴

When the clay mass, the plaster moulds, the turnery machines, the sprayers, the polishers, the drying machines, the chemists, the designers, the modellers, the engineers and the operators were done wrestling and negotiating the form of the products in the mass-house, the laboratory, the design studio, the plaster workshop, the foundry and the turnery, the artefacts were ready for baking. The products were loaded onto a train of wagons which was then driven very slowly through the first of the tunnel kilns, the so-called bisque kiln. The bisque kiln was 63 metres long, 70 cm wide and 70 cm tall, and could hold 42 wagons. It was run 24/7, required two operators on continuous watch, and pulled 452 kilowatt. A wagon's journey through the bisque kiln took approximately 48 hours.⁴⁵ The purpose of the bisque baking is of course to consolidate the form of the objects, making them hard and resistant. These product characteristics are achieved through complex chemical processes induced by the temperatures in the kiln. The bisque kiln is divided into four zones: preheating, heating, burning zone and cooling zone.

The preheating zone functions as an additional drying process. The last traces of moisture disappears when the temperature passes 200 degrees centigrade. If the preheating were skipped, the objects would have burst from rapidly expanding water vapour. Thus, the preheating zone is essentially a process of acclimatization, or a negotiation between two non-human actors (the ceramic objects and the kiln) in which both parties make concessions: the products accept the alterations in their material composition, while the kiln acknowledge a prolonged baking process—all in order to arrive at a desired result. The heating zone makes sure any remains of organic material, such as oil or wax dispersed in the ball clay is burned out. At about 500 degrees centigrade, the chemical reactions begin. The clay minerals are divided into new combinations.⁴⁶

When the temperature passes 1000 degrees centigrade, these divided clay minerals establish new chemical reactions and composites with each other. If left uncatered to, these chemical alterations would only accelerate until the mass would melt. To avoid this, the temperature in the baking zone peaks at about 1200 degrees centigrade, so that the processes are aborted. Through the cooling zone, the glassy mass coagulates and combines into the white, solid, porous and rugged-surface material known as bisque.

Before the products were ready for the second baking, they were dipped in glaze, which consisted of sand, soda, a little feldspar, lead and boron.⁴⁷ The second tunnel kiln, the glazing kiln, was ca. 50 metres long and the process took ca. 35 hours.⁴⁸ In the second baking, which peaked at about 1100 degrees centigrade, the pulverized glaze melts into a glass coating closing the pores and giving the products their characteristic lustre.⁴⁹

44. N.N., "Godt år for keramikk, fajanse- og teglverksindustrien" in *Stavangeren*, 04.01.1952

45. Martin Håland, "Biskovnen" in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 3, No. 4, 1958, p 4

46. Ib Kjølens, "Våre råstoffer" in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 1, No. 4, 1956, p 4

47. Ib Kjølens, "Fra produksjonen" in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 1, No. 5, 1956, p 4

48. N.N., "Fra råleire til middagsservice" in *Dagen*, 23.04.1951

Products meant for underglaze decor were sent to the decor department between the two bakings. In the early 1950s, underglaze decor still meant paint applied by free-hand, aided by stencils, or stamped onto the object by rubber stamps.⁵⁰ Underglaze decor was revolutionized at Figgjo when an in-house silk-screen printing office was opened in the mid-fifties. Silk-screen printing meant a whole other level of flexibility, efficiency and possibilities when it came to decor design, and would greatly influence Figgjo's design profile from the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s.

The part of the production destined for traditional overglaze decor, such as golden rims and tracing patterns, were sent off to the decor department for application after the second baking. In order to make these decorations stick, a third baking was required. This took place in a smaller, designated kiln and reached 750-800 degrees centigrade.⁵¹ Golden rims and tracing patterns—especially naturalistic floral ones—were widely popular in the first half of the 1950s, and Figgjo did their best to cater to the subsequent

49. Kjølseth, *op.cit.* p 4

50. Ragnar Grimsrud, *Flintvare* (Internal memo, undated—Figgjo archive)

51. N.N., "Her blir fayansen til" in *Fædrelandsvennen*, 10.04.1954

demand, despite the extra work and production time overglaze decor demanded [Figure



Figure 12–6: Overglaze decor being applied by steady hands in the decor department. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

12-6].

It should now hopefully have become somewhat clearer how Figgjo was transformed from a pottery workshop into an earthenware factory, and how the organization, the business management, the markets, the plant, the nature and structure of the labour, the infrastructure, the production methods, the technology, the materials, the product types and the product qualities all both influenced and were effected by this transformation process. We now turn to examine of the role of design strategies, design management and product design in this process.

12.4 Design strategy & management: “something for everyone”

As mentioned, the Norwegian marketplace for domestic utensils in the late forties and early fifties was characterized by somewhat of a paradox. Times were good for business start-ups and expansions in the manufactured goods sector, much due to the extraordinary market demand accumulated as a result of the war and the import restrictions. At the same

time, the strict currency control and shortages of materials and labour made for some serious challenges in terms of high quality and high volume production. In 1950, Figgjo's sales manager Harald Torgersen described their strategy in coping with this peculiar situation as follows:

People request more beautiful products,.. but it is difficult for the new factories. The demand is unsatisfied over the entire nation, and especially in the countryside, so it must be rather uniform types which are brought to the market. Here, we need more people, and gradually we can get better equipment. We are constructing another kiln, in addition to lengthening the old one, but with increased production, space will be scarce. We will at least try to bring forth novelties, to meet the customers' demands.⁵²

Figgjo had, in other words, their hands full trying to supply the nation's many new and re-commercialized homes with sufficiently large numbers of plates, cups and saucers. Novel design was here seen as a surplus activity, as something which would have to wait until the basic quantitative needs were satisfied, and not considered a possible means to this end. But, as Torgersen states, the time when novel design activity could be justified was near, because the customers seemed to be demanded it. Coming from a sales manager, these attitudes are hardly surprising. Given the frantic demand, the company would sell everything they could manage to produce. Hence, to a sales manager, increased production capacity and volume were more important priorities than design and product development. However, when the customers soon would regain their selective power in a more discerning marketplace, novel design would be commercially necessary.

The rather mundane character of and attitude towards design at Figgjo around 1950 must be understood in the context of business strategy and company development. Expansion of the workforce, construction of factory buildings, specialization of management structure, new material technology and mechanization of production lines and other aspects of becoming a sizable industrial earthenware factory discussed above certainly took its toll. Even Ragnar Grimsrud, who always kept the modernist design ideals close at heart, was clearly marked by these monumental and momentous tasks of the company's transformation process. Reflecting on his own role as design manager in the midst of heading the industrialization process, he stated laconically and with a scent of resignation: "[O]ne starts out as an artist and ends up as a technician".⁵³

Much in the same manner, the decor of the first earthenware products to emerge from the new Figgjo factory was not either especially elaborate or novel in terms of aesthetic considerations. But whereas the products themselves was based on a long, advanced and intense technological development process, the decor was based on highly traditional and conventional methods and motifs. Hand painted decor was quite expensive and

52. Harald Torgersen interviewed in Mette Tellander, "Fra råstoffer til kopper og tallerkener" in *Aftenposten*, 18.11.1950 ("Folk spør etter penere varer,.. men det er vanskelig for de nye fabrikkene. Behovet er udekket over hele landet, og spesielt på landsbygdene, så det må bli nokså ensartede typer som kommer ut på markedet. Her trenger vi flere folk, så vil vi etterhvert kunne få bedre utstyr. Vi holder på å bygge en ovn til, foruten at vi forlenger den gamle, men med økt produksjon vil plassen bli liten. Vi vil i alle fall forsøke å bringe nyheter, for å tilfredsstille de krav kundene stiller til oss.")

53. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in Mette Tellander, "Fra råstoffer til kopper og tallerkener" in *Aftenposten*, 18.11.1950 ("[M]an starter som kunstner og slutter som tekniker")

labour-intensive, and the traditional alternative was standardized transfer images. These were then somewhat scantily adapted to the manufacturer's own products, but could hardly shake off the character of being very much *applied* to the objects and not so much an integrated element in the product design as a whole.

However, two new decor techniques capable of radically changing this quite humdrum image would greatly influence the identity of the Figgjo products in the course of the fifties: silk screen printing and coloured clay mass coating. Silk screen printing made the design of own decors much simpler and cheaper. Thus, even a relatively small company like Figgjo could design and produce decors which were much more distinct and characteristic of the company's own identity, as well as facilitating a harmonisation of product (3D) and decor (2D) design.⁵⁴ Another advantage of the versatility and adaptability of the silk screen printing technique was that the public's various affections could thus be indulged more easily.

Coloured clay mass coating, so-called *engobe* decor, enabled the manufacture of all-coloured products. This was achieved by spraying unbaked products with liquid, coloured clay mass.⁵⁵ By giving the entire artefact a colour, the perceived (by the manufacturer) public demand for ornament and decoration could somehow be met in an alternative way which was acceptable to all involved parties. Plates and cups in cheerful colours satisfied what was perceived as the general public's flare for joy and cosiness, it satisfied the business management's desire for rational and cost-efficient production, and it satisfied the design community's ban on figurative ornament.

These products in coloured clay mass coating became somewhat of a hallmark for Figgjo in the fifties, much due to—one might hazard to say—this ingenuity of using colour as ornament in its own right. Throughout the decade, the company launched three major service series utilizing the coloured clay mass coating decor technique; *Grete* (1951), *Sissel* (1954) and *Benta* (1958). They all became huge commercial successes, and thereby largely responsible for Figgjo's growth and vitality in this period.

A similar approach to the use of colour as ornament was developed in Finland at about the same time, where Kaj Franck used colour as the only explicitly ornamental or decorative effect in many of his designs for the Arabia earthenware factory and the Nuutajärvi and Iittala glassworks.⁵⁶ From the mid-fifties, this use of colour as the sole decorative effect is found extensively also in Norwegian glass products. The tendency is preeminent particularly in the more affordable glass series from Hadeland glassworks in this period, especially those designed by Willy Johansson.⁵⁷ As a curiosity, it might be mentioned that Figgjo's first service in the coloured clay mass coating decor technique, *Grete*, was launched in 1951—a year before Arabia's famous crockery range *Kilta* designed by Franck.⁵⁸

54. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, "Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger" in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 18

55. Ragnar Grimsrud, *Flintvare* (Internal memo, undated—Figgjo archive)

56. Kaisa Koivisto, "Designers, Glass Makers and Rationalisation" in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, 2002, p 80-91. Of course, e.g. Aino Aalto and Alvar Aalto had placed great emphasis on the aesthetic effects of coloured glass in their designs for both mould blown and pressed glass for Nuutajärvi-Iittala already in the early 1930s.

Sales manager Harald Torgersen's heralding of a design strategy based on offering products catering to what he regarded as the general public's increasing fastidiousness and desire for novel designs was soon materialized in the appearance of Figgjo's products. Just over a year after Torgersen's statement, a newspaper could report on the shift in design strategy at Figgjo: "As the demand for the simplest household services has been met, one has turned to lighter and finer production with richer decor in gold and transfer images."⁵⁹

So, what we see here, then, is the dawning of a design strategy aiming to please just about any potential customer by courting very different styles and tastes—all safely within the boundaries of average household economies, that is. The slightly romanticized, traditional and rather humdrum product range of the first few years was superseded by two main tendencies—one dominated by historicising, quasi-baroque forms, naturalistic decor and gold rims, and one dominated by more ideologically "correct" modernist design, i.e. simple, non-intrusive forms and no or at least highly abstracted decor. The products belonging to this latter path was intimately related to the coloured clay mass coating decor technique discussed above.

We have seen earlier that Ragnar Grimsrud was raised, trained and socialized into a modernist design idiom. No wonder, then, that he made no secret of where his own preferences were situated; it was without a doubt with the second of the two main design trajectories described above that his passion lay. But in order to survive in a capitalist marketplace, perhaps especially since the domestic Norwegian market was relatively small, the company's design strategy could not be based exclusively on the design manager's own preferences, but had to accommodate "less cultivated" tastes as well. The British design historian Peter Dormer has asserted that

-
57. Albert Steen, *Willy Johansson og Hadeland glassverk* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1984). Other high-profiled Hadeland designers of the period, such as Arne Jon Jutrem and Hermann Bongard also designed products by this approach—both industrially produced glass as well as handicraft objects for the so-called *K-glass* series (*K-glass* was short for *kunstglass—art glass*). For an account of Willy Johansson's contribution to the *K-glass* series, see: Bjørn Erik Reigstad, "Willy Johansson—Scandinavian Design i norsk glass" in Wider Halén (ed.), *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996) p 50-57. For information on Jutrem, see: Gerd Hennum, *Maleren og glasskunstneren Arne Jon Jutrem* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1999)
58. Charlotte and Peter Fiell, *Scandinavian Design* (Köln: Taschen, 2002) p 190. Although Figgjo's *Grete* and Arabia's *Kilta* pioneered the use of solid colour glaze devoid of printed/painted decor in a Nordic context, earlier examples can be found elsewhere. One of the most remarkable in terms of commercial impact (production volume and lifespan) is the *Fiesta* model introduced in 1936 by the world's largest manufacturer of ceramic tableware, the Homer Laughlin China Company (USA), designed by art director Frederick Hurten Rhead. The American historian Regina Lee Blaszczyk has attributed the success of the *Fiesta* range much to the same factors I have argued made Figgjo's *Grete* and *Sissel* models so popular: the design facilitated rational production, satisfied the general public's flare for joy cosiness, while at the same time being "modern" enough to be stomachable by the design elites. But then her portrayal of Rhead and his attitudes towards design for mass produced ceramics also indicates many affinities between him and Grimsrud. It may also be mentioned that Homer Laughlin in the 1930s also pioneered two other product technologies that proved very important to Figgjo (and other Nordic manufacturers) in the 1950s: oven-to-table ware (1933) and silk screen printing decor (1936): Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) p 127-167
59. N.N., "Godt år for keramikk, fajanse- og teglverkindustrien" in *Stavangeren*, 04.01.1952 ("Etter hvert som behovet for de enkleste husholdningsserviser er blitt dekket, har man gått over til lettere og finere produksjon med rikere dekor i gull og avtrykksbilder.")

One of the interesting tensions in the machine age is that between designer as intellectual, wanting to serve the masses, and manufacturer and advertiser as providers of consumerist cornucopia. The one saying: 'give them the plain truth.' The other: 'to hell with that, make it sexy.'⁶⁰

Apart from the rather dubious distribution of intellectuality between designer and manufacturer displayed in this description, I also believe Dormer overstates this "tension" between ideology and business. This is not to say that it is non-existent nor uninteresting—simply that it, in my view, is intrinsic to the role of an industrial designer to *deal* with this tension, be that by utilizing, resolving, reducing or at least tolerating it. Ragnar Grimsrud's position at Figgjo is a prime example of this. Most probably due to his dual role as both design manager and general manager, and the financial responsibilities that followed the latter, he developed a rather pragmatic attitude towards this problem. In 1955, he expressed this market-induced pragmatism in the columns of *Bonytt*, normally a forum for very idealist opinions and mediation:

No one shall deny that the term "the public's demand" contains a reality which must be met... But behind every new service the factory launches lies a fortune, in modelling, in moulds and equipment, and this fact, combined with a limited market require consideration. Their production volume is large and this volume can not be more homogeneous than the public for which one produces. One must offer "something for everyone".⁶¹

Large-scale industrial production required long, complicated and highly expensive design and product development processes, Grimsrud argued. To justify this activity and survive commercially, the company's design strategy had to be based on the perceived taste preferences of a sufficiently broad segment of the public. Grimsrud seemed to fear that launching products of a too radically modernist design could easily turn into the business equivalent of suicide. But at the same time, he claimed to see signs of improvement and hope on the horizon:

[T]he interest in underglaze effects, in good design and interesting material and colour effects is catching on. Gold decor and floral tracing decors will have a hard time reconciling with the new environment. White and one-coloured things in bright, blonde colours which do not compete with the food offer great opportunities... We will see the good form again, freed from camouflage.⁶²

60. Peter Dormer, *The Meanings of Modern Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990) p 47

61. Ragnar Grimsrud, "Produsenten har ordet" in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 186-187 ("Ingen skal nekte for at begrepet "publikums krav" inneholder en realitet som skal imøtekommes... Men det står en formue bak hver nyhet fabrikken bringer av spisestell, i modellarbeide, i arbeidsformer og utstyr, og det faktum sammen med et begrenset marked krever overveielse. Deres produksjonsvolum er stort og dette volum kan ikke bli mer homogent enn det publikum en produserer for. En er nødt til å bringe "noe for enhver".")

62. *Ibid.* ("[I]nteressen for underglasurvirkinger, for god form og interessante material- og farvevirkinger er satt inn. Gulldekor og blomstrete overføringsdekorer vil ha vanskelig for å finne seg til rette i det nye miljø. Hvite og ensfargede ting i lyse lette farver, som ikke konkurrerer med maten gir store muligheter... Vi vil se den gode form igjen, befridd for kamouflasje.")

Grimsrud clearly wanted to pursue his own professional ethic, largely dominated by the modernist design idiom, and concentrate his efforts on the design and manufacture of—to quote Gregor Paulsson—*more beautiful everyday goods (vackrare vardagsvara)*.⁶³ Of course, the only acceptable beauty here was the modernists' own notion of beauty—not the general public's. For the time being, however, Grimsrud had to accept that if Figgjo were to survive, they had to design products that were appreciated by a much wider audience than his own fellow partisans in the design community. These arguments can thus be understood as a defence on behalf of the industrial manufacturers, who were often the target of harsh criticism from the design community for being too conservative and unwilling to invest in bold, radical, modern design. Such an interpretation becomes even more plausible when assessing the prominence of factors like market comprehension and manufacturability in the list of the eight most important aspects in the development and design of a new service Grimsrud presented in *Bonytt*:

1. be of current interest, new, but there must also be a market for it—immediately and over years,
2. have a correct price,
3. be importunate in the display window,
4. not be importunate in the home, but have a high utilitarian quality, be functionally correct in all its parts and in addition space-saving in the cupboard,
5. be adjusted to the factory's technological standard. No part should have any extra degree of difficulty.
6. be possible to distribute its manufacture correctly among the factory's departments,
7. produce acceptable revenue in all stages of production with low percentage of faulty goods,
8. be flexible in packing, shipment and stock holding.⁶⁴

Clearly, the majority of these points demonstrate concerns which in the applied art community were largely downgraded or frowned on. Aspects related to market adjustment, marketing and commercialism (as expressed in points 1 through 3) were still rather taboo, or simply not interesting—at least to the more idealist fractions of the community, who had little or no contact with the fiscal realities of mass-production and commercial business management. Despite the common romanticism regarding manufacturability, which often took on a very abstract and lofty character, Grimsrud's highly pedestrian and realistic account of the logistics and economics of factory production (points 5 through 8) represented a quite different level of pragmatism and prudence. The only point on his list which clearly falls in line with the habitual jargon of the applied art community and the *Bonytt* discourse is the focus on austere formal expressions, usability and functionality expressed in point 4.

63. Gregor Paulsson, *Vackrare Vardagsvara* (Stockholm: Svenska Slöjdföreningen, 1919)

64. Grimsrud, *op.cit.* ("1. være aktuelt, nytt, men det skal også være marked for det—straks og gjennom år, 2. ha riktig pris, 3. være påtrengende i utstillingsvinduet, 4. ikke være påtrengende i hjemmet, men ha en høy brukskvalitet, være funksjonelt riktig i alle sine deler og dertill plassøkonomisk i skapet, 5. ligge til rette for fabrikkens tekniske standard. Ingen del bør ha ekstra vanskelighetsgrad. 6. kunne arbeidsfordeles riktig mellom fabrikkens avdeliger, 7. gi forsvarlig resultat i alle produksjonstrinn med lav prosent for feilvarer, 8. være smidig for pakking, forsendelse og lagerhold.")

Grimsrud also displayed a considerable willingness to work out compromises between his own convictions and the much despised “public’s taste”. The products from the early fifties were very much “either-or”, but as the decade went by, the designs became more varied and nuanced in character, trying to sway popular taste towards modernist aesthetics—or vice versa. When asked by *Bonytt* journalist Harriet Clayhills in 1959 whether he considered the public’s taste to be encumbering in the design work, he answered:

No, the functional form neither should nor need be renounced. And the desire for “cosiness” which the public often have when it comes to utility articles, can be accomplished in an artistically acceptable manner. There are plenty examples of good and beautiful things becoming sales successes. The attentive public here at home has grown plentiful since the war.⁶⁵

As we can see, the uneasiness which four years earlier had haunted his pragmatic concession of having to design “something for everyone” is now replaced by a much more optimistic, consolidated and consistent attitude. What seems to have caused this change is, as the quote shows, a greater belief in the momentum of the modern design aesthetic, and—perhaps equally important—the development of new production technology such as e.g. the above discussed decor design techniques.

Towards the end of the 1950s, Grimsrud seemed rather content with the direction in which Figgjo had managed to steer their design strategy. It had been a cumbersome road to go down, dominated by hard negotiations between his modernist design ideology, the practical constraints of industrial production, the commercial requirements of business management, the expectations of the design community, and the tricky business of catering to the taste of the general public. But the situation had definitely improved, as he stated that

On the whole, as far as I can see, the interest is moving from the representative product which one procures for the sake of its social prestige to the quotidian product, the one one needs to enjoy everyday life.⁶⁶

This perceived shift in public taste, together with the rationalization of the production and the technological developments achieved at Figgjo combined to make up a much more agreeable and stimulating basis for Grimsrud’s work as designer and design manager. The undesirable, but necessary task of designing traditionalesque, historicising, quasi-baroque products adorned with naturalistic decor and gold rims in order to offer “something for everyone”, as he had put it earlier, could now be drastically tuned down. To Grimsrud, this development was a true relief not only because it meant greater correspondence

65. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 18 (“Nei, den funksjonelle formen hverken bør eller trenger man gi avkall på. Og det ønskemål om “hyggelighet” som publikum gjerne har når det gjelder bruksting, kan gjennomføres på en kunstnerisk forsvarlig måte. Det finnes nok av eksempler på at gode og pene ting er blitt salgssuksesser. Det våkne publikum er blitt tallrikt hos oss siden krigen.”)

66. *Ibid.* (“I det hele tatt flyttes, såvidt jeg kan skjønne, interessen fra representasjonsvaren som man skaffer seg for den sosiale prestisjes skyld, til hverdagsvaren, den man trenger for å trives i det daglige.”)

between public taste and his own aesthetic preferences, but also because it gave him and his team more freedom of manoeuvre regarding other aspects of the design process. For instance, one such highly prioritized task was designing for rational production and flexible use through optimization of both systems and objects:

[The form itself] is becoming increasingly functional. Not only has the number of individual parts in the services been reduced, those which are left are becoming increasingly practical. Personally, I prefer working with form and function. That point of view is in one's blood when one, like myself, has had one's years of apprenticeship during functionalism's time of breakthrough. I find it particularly satisfying to bring forth a service, because it involves coordinating many items within the framework of one distinct form group. It is also a task which takes its time.⁶⁷

This passage indicates that Grimsrud saw the current state of affairs in the late fifties as the long-desired fulfilment of, or at least rapprochement towards the fulfilment of many of the fundamental principles of the functionalist ideology of the interwar years which after all was the foundation for and guideline throughout his entire career. Finally, he seems to argue, it was now possible, even within the context of industrial mass-production and commercial business, to design according to modernist principles without making too many concessions, adjustments and compromises.

Grimsrud seemed to believe that the fifties had seen the end of the time when designers and manufacturers had to spend all their time and resources on constantly designing new versions of the emperor's new clothes in order to cater to a sufficiently large market. No longer forced to offer "fake beauty", they could now dedicate their time to more "honest" and important tasks, such as rationalization of production and optimization of usability. Still, even in 1958 it was deemed necessary to put on a "propaganda week" with the purpose of boosting interest in Norwegian applied art, organized by the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) in collaboration with the National Association of Glassware and Crockery Merchants (Glass- og steintøyhandlernes Landsforbund) and the manufacturers in this industry, including Figgjo.⁶⁸

12.5 Conclusion

This chapter started out by studying the structural relations making up the framework for the earthenware production at Figgjo: the development of the plant into a modern factory, the scientification of business management, the rationalization of the production run, the

67. *Ibid.* ("[Selve formen] er blitt stadig mer funksjonell. Ikke bare er antallet av enkelte deler i servisene blitt mindre, de som er igjen blir stadig mer praktiske. Personlig arbeider jeg helst med form og funksjon. Det synspunktet har man nå en gang i blodet når man som jeg har hatt sine læreår i funksjonalismens gjennombruddstid. Jeg finner det særlig stimulerende å arbeide frem et servise, fordi det innebærer å koordinere mange gjenstander innenfor rammen av en bestemt formgruppe. Det er også et arbeide som tar sin tid.")

68. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 19.03.1958 (Figgjo archive)

advances in material technology, and the mechanization of production processes. These factors were intimately linked to the design ideology which came to guide the product development at Figgjo throughout the 1950s.

We have also explored in some detail the interactions of materials, men and machines in the Figgjo factory, thus learning more about some of the basic prescriptions and proscriptions for the design process in such an enterprise. We then moved on to an analysis of how the company tried to position itself in the realm of consumer goods in the peculiar setting offered by 1950s' Norway, focusing on the construction of design strategy and management.

The translations of production management, technology and design strategy analysed here tell of a very dynamic period in the history of Norwegian industrial design. The manufactured goods industry underwent widespread modernisation, and the industrial design field experienced an unprecedented process of professionalisation. As regarding the wider narrative of design cultural change as an interplay of ideology and practice, Figgjo's remarkable transformations in this period can be said to reveal many of the aspects that contributed to challenging the traditional applied art approach to design.

Whereas the last discussion of this chapter might have wandered off slightly from the very material character established introductorily, the focus shall soon again turn from mind to matter as we now set out to study the implementation of the design strategy dubbed "something for everyone" by exploring the most important Figgjo products of the fifties.

The formation of a factory: Figgjo's transition to industrial earthenware production

13 Folksy forms:

Designing for consumer consent

13.1 Introduction

Moving from more structural and strategic concerns to practical and material ones, this chapter will investigate how Figgjo in the 1950s implemented their strategy of offering “something for everyone”. How did the company solicit consumer consent through design? How did they imagine their consumers? Could the perceived public taste preferences be reconciled with a modernist design ethic? Was there a way of being both modern and mercantile? From this perspective, it will be the company’s more popular and commercially successful products that command attention, and this chapter is thus devoted to the discussion of the designs that made Figgjo a household name in 1950s’ Norway.

Nevertheless, the chapter begins with a short presentation of the very first product to emerge from the kilns at Figgjo after the transition to earthenware factory. This humble beginning might be seen as a “trial run” of the new facilities, technologies, materials and machinery, and its completely commonplace design can best be described as mundane meadows on standard shapes.

The first Figgjo earthenware products to really achieve widespread dissemination and use, long production life and commercial success can not be said to have confirmed to any modernist design idiom. This chapter will discuss why a company with a decidedly modern and rationalist identity and a design manager with unquestionable preferences for modernist design chose to resort to invented traditions and notional nostalgia when designing their first major product series.

However, parallel to this line of traditionalesque design, Figgjo developed a trajectory of product series that to a much higher degree did relate to the modern design ideals as we have seen them being discussed in the design community. What is particularly interesting about Figgjo’s take on what might be called a moderated modernism (or even the Scandinavian Design phenomenon) is their use of particular design features such as the coloured clay mass coating as a means to achieve both credibility and commerciality.

13.2 Mundane meadows on standard shapes

The first earthenware products emerged from the kiln at the new Figgjo factory in 1949. Until the inauguration of the second tunnel kiln in 1951, the same kiln had to be used for both first (bisque) and second (glaze) baking. This meant that both the production capacity as well as the product range was quite limited the first couple of years.¹ The very

reason for converting to earthenware production had been to cater to the lucrative market for reasonably priced services for everyday use. And in a marketplace characterized by frantic shortages and many offerings of highly varying quality from the disregarded “ashtray industry”, Figgjo’s first earthenware services seems to have been right on the mark.

Even though it was still seller’s market around 1950, too advanced or extraordinary designed products would probably not be appreciated by the general public—at least this seems to have been the manufacturer’s frame of mind. Also, the limited capacity at the plant at this time prohibited simultaneous production of many models. Add to this the fact that Figgjo was not only a brand new factory, but also a rookie in terms of large-scale industrial production runs, logistics and business management. Although Ragnar Grimsrud had had about a year’s experience from industrial earthenware production at Egersund, this was almost twenty years ago, and—perhaps more important—the rest of the staff had little or no such experience and knowledge. Certainly, Grimsrud asserted in 1950 that the first year of earthenware production had been satisfactory much due to an already qualified staff.² But the qualifications he refers to here must be those concerning ceramic production in general, and certainly not qualifications concerning industrial production of earthenware.

Keeping this situation in mind, it seems highly understandable and reasonable that Figgjo’s first earthenware products were quite modest and non-impudent in character. Their design was not sensational or dramatic in any way, but rather reserved and conventional. Due to the situation just discussed, Figgjo offered just one service model during the very first period of earthenware production—a model called *Perlekant*.³ For the sake of variety, though, this model was offered with several different decors [Figure 13-1].

The shape of this first earthenware service from Figgjo is very basic. The choice of such a simple and conventional design was probably an answer to problems of various kinds. Being the first and only service the company could offer, it was of vital importance that it did not flop in the marketplace on account of alienating design. Furthermore, there was no reason to create any more difficult challenges in terms of production methods, production technology and manufacturability than absolutely necessary.

The factory was still under construction and expansion, the production run and logistics had not yet been properly run in, the different production departments struggled with establishing satisfactory processes and routines for their tasks, and the staff was still quite inexperienced. Hence, trying to get a satisfactory percentage of the production volume all the way through the production run from mass house to warehouse was a sufficiently big challenge even for such a basic design.⁴

The design of this product is thus perhaps best understood as a test of the production run—an exam in the field of industrial manufacture, not design skills. Its standard shapes

1. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 07.06.1951 (Figgjo archive)

2. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in Mette Tellander, “Fra råstoffer til kopper og tallerkener” in *Aftenposten*, 18.11.1950

3. Notes from the Figgjo company museum (Figgjo archive)



Figure 13–1: Figgjo’s first earthenware service, model *Perlekant* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1949-50.
Design: Ragnar Grimsrud. Top: Decor *Gro*. Design: Aini Stangeland and Rolf Frøyland. Bottom:
Name of decor and designer unknown. (Photos from Figgjo archive)

are thus almost conspicuously anonymous; they do not easily evoke discussions on trends, aesthetic confessions, philosophical considerations or ideological affiliations.

4. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 07.06.1951, Minutes from production meeting (produksjonsmøtet) at Figgjo fajanse 17.09.1951, Minutes from production meeting (produksjonsmøtet) at Figgjo Fajanse 04.02.1952 (Figgjo archive)

What *is* striking, though, is its poor finish. The quality of surface, glaze and material processing seems very immature, and do not exceed the level obtained by the earlier pottery products. This finish, combined with the anonymous standard design, gives the service a rudimentary quality and readily categorizes it as a typical makeshift product.

The motif contours of some of the decors available on the first service, such as *Gro* and *Turi*, were stamped on by rubber stamps, and the colours then filled in by hand painting.⁵ This method was an underglaze decor and thus resistant and durable, but—according to Grimsrud—due to its less refined expression only “applicable to somewhat cheaper products”.⁶ The rather mundane, humdrum character of Figgjo’s first earthenware service was, in other words, *intended*. At least this seems to be the case in terms of design and decor, if not regarding the finish and quality.

However, the service was also offered with a more elaborate decor as well. One interesting example is one called *Høysommer*, which was the first overglaze decor made by enamel overprint tracing image at Figgjo.⁷ These were standard images made in vast quantities, often in Central Europe, in a lithographic technique.⁸ *Høysommer* had a highly naturalistic floral pattern in blue, red and green, and this decor technique surely replicated nature in a more credible manner than the rubber stamped *Gro*. The *Høysommer* decor was perhaps too elaborate for this rather rudimentary service, but became so popular that it was transferred to the next, more sinuously designed service model and sold well for many years—despite it being among the most expensive decors.⁹

13.3 Invented traditions and notional nostalgia

While makeshift products had been easily saleable in the first postwar years, the company management at Figgjo learned the hard way that the quality and finish of the first earthenware service simply would not do in the battle for the Norwegian customers in the fifties. It was acknowledged that “the public’s demand for first-class products has increased rapidly. A fine grading is an expensive thing, but it is necessary today.”¹⁰ It thus became essential to design and produce services of a much higher quality and more impressive finish in order to succeed in an increasingly selective and choosy marketplace.

But it was not just the finish that needed serious improvement. Ragnar Grimsrud soon realized that the increased production capacity brought about by the inauguration of the second tunnel kiln had to be used to build a wider product assortment—not as a result of the need for differentiated product properties, but because of a perceived market demand

5. Notes from the Figgjo company museum (Figgjo archive)

6. Ragnar Grimsrud, *Flintvare* (Internal memo, undated—Figgjo archive) (“brukbart for litt billigere varer.”)

7. Notes from the Figgjo company museum (Figgjo archive)

8. Grimsrud, *op.cit.*

9. *Katalog over en del av våre artikler som selges mest i dag* (catalogue, undated (ca 1955)—Figgjo archive)

10. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 28.06.1952 (Figgjo archive) (“publikums krav til førsteklasses varer var steget sterkt. En fin sortering er en kostbar ting, men den er nødvendig idag.”)

attributed to variety in taste. In 1951, Grimsrud remarked that “The public start demanding a richer assortment of decor.”¹¹ The solution to this challenge was to launch three new model ranges in the course of approximately a year, each available with many different decors.

Unlike every service model to emerge from Figgjo from 1951 onwards, the first earthenware service model was not given a serial number. This fact might also be interpreted in support of the above mentioned suggestion that this was somewhat of a trial run product. The first service model which was given a serial number was named *Eidsvoll*, launched in 1951 with serial number 100, followed by number 200 *Jarlsberg* from 1952 [Figure 13-2]. Each of the 26 individual parts got its specific product number



Figure 13-2: Left: Parts from the service model number 100, *Eidsvoll* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1951. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Right: Parts from the service model number 200, *Jarlsberg* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1952. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Facsimile from catalogue in Figgjo archive)

varying the two last digits, while the first digit indicated the items' belonging to the same

11. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 07.06.1951 (Figgjo archive) (“Publikum begynner å forlange et rikere utvalg i dekor.”)

model series.¹² This system was inaugurated with *Eidsvoll*, logically enough model number 100, and would remain unaltered for decades—the only change was the expansion from three to four digits around 1960 when two digits were needed to denominate new model series.

Eidsvoll showed that Figgjo definitely had managed to raise the level of quality and finish with respect to the first earthenware service. This was a far more sinuously designed and pretentious product. The formal language which was chosen for *Eidsvoll* might, however, seem surprising given the fact that design manager Grimsrud was, as we have seen, a convinced modernist at heart, and Figgjo a company insisting on its modern, rational and industrial image. Nevertheless, they chose to appeal to values such as familiarity and tradition rather than modernity and rationality [Figure 13-3]. Figgjo did



Figure 13–3: Parts from the service model number 100, *Eidsvoll* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1951. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. *Eidsvoll* was mostly adorned with various naturalistic floral decors: Left: *Victoria*. Top right: *Kjøperose*. Bottom right: *Vårblomst*. (Facsimiles from catalogues and photos from Figgjo archive)

not believe that the market would accept a production range consisting exclusively of modernist design.¹³ In fact, Figgjo’s assortment in the early fifties indicates that they

12. *Katalog over en del av våre artikler som selges mest i dag* (catalogue, undated (ca 1955)—Figgjo archive)

13. Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006

were convinced that the great majority of customers in this “modern” decade wanted conventional, traditionalistic and nostalgic design, and the longevity and popularity of these products shows that they were hardly mistaken.

The latter point is strengthened by the fact that the company launched yet another service model with a similar formal language a mere year later [Figure 13-4]. This



Figure 13-4: Parts from the service model number 200, *Jarlsberg* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1952. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Top left: Decor *Bukett*. Top right: Decor *Marie*, one of Figgjo’s best-sellers of the fifties. Bottom left: Sugar bowl in decor *Empire*. Bottom right: Jug in decor *Marie*. Decor design: Rolf Frøyland. (facsimiles from catalogues and photos from Figgjo archive)

model—series 200—was given the name *Jarlsberg*, and was reported to be an instant hit with the wholesale dealers.¹⁴ *Jarlsberg* had a design which was even more “baroque” and “anti-modern” than *Eidsvoll*, dominated by intricate shapes, broken curves and rich ornaments. Features like jug and cup handles designed in broken lines even though they were cast in one piece and modelled plate rims which meant supplementary work in the post-turnery finishing process tell of a design targeted for emotional response rather than manufacturability or utility. In the end, it was this highly labour-intensive production which caused the decision to shut down the production of *Jarlsberg* in 1959 in spite of it still being very popular.¹⁵

The decors offered on the *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg* services were largely in tune with the formal language of the models. This meant extensive use of gold, elaborate patterns, and naturalistic floral motifs—all alluding to traditional styles of porcelain production. However, some less elaborate decors were also offered—still heavily leaning on the alluring power of gold, though—intended for customers of a more “modern” persuasion. For instance, *Jarlsberg* was available with a decor called *Glansgullbord*, which consisted of a wide but quite simple hand-painted golden rim. *Eidsvoll* was in 1956 launched with a decor called *Helle/sort*, designed by Rolf Frøyland, which was marketed as

- an extra zest to the festive table. If You are looking for an exclusive service, then *HELLE/sort* is right in the mark. A black ribbon and a narrow golden rim meet every demand on a modern, simple and stylish decor. Any housewife would be proud to own such a service.¹⁶

In this way, an otherwise very much traditional and conservative service model was attempted lifted to a more modern youthful and exclusive sphere [Figure 13-5]. The design community would hardly agree, though, that *Helle/sort* met “every demand on a modern, simple and stylish decor”. By means of a new decor and a targeted advertisement, Figgjo seems to have tried to fill a gap in the market between the traditionalist products discussed above and the more modernist products they had introduced between the launch of the *Eidsvoll* model in 1951 and the *Helle/sort* decor in 1956.

It is interesting to note, then, that this advertisement for *Eidsvoll Helle/sort* appeared in *Bonytt* three times during 1957,¹⁷ especially when considering that Figgjo’s sum total of advertisements placed in *Bonytt* during the entire 1950s amounts to no more than a dozen or so, and only three of them were for products that could be characterized as having a modernist design: one single advertisement for the smash hit *Sissel* service and two for its less commercially successful successor *Benta*.¹⁸ This situation becomes particularly intriguing due to the fact that all these three advertisements for Figgjo’s

14. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 20.04.1953 (Figgjo archive)

15. Minutes from management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 07.12.1959 (Figgjo archive)

16. *HELLE/sort*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1956-57—Figgjo archive) (“- en ekstra spiss på festbordet. Skal De ha et eksklusivt stell er HELLE/sort midt i blinken. En sort bord og en smal gullkant dekker alle krav som stilles til en moderne, enkel og stilig dekor. Enhver husmor ville være stolt over å eie et slikt stell.”)

17. See e.g., *Bonytt*, No. 9, 1957, p iv

18. *Bonytt*, No. 5, 1957, p iii, *Bonytt*, No. 3, 1958, p 48 and *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1959, p 18



HELLE / SORT

8-3514 H3

- en ekstra spiss på festbordet ...

FF
FIGGJO FLINT

Skal De ha et eksklusivt stell er HELLE/sort midt i blinken.
En sort bord og en smal gullkant dekker alle krav som stilles til en moderne, enkel og stilig dekor.
Enhver husmor ville være stolt over å eie et slikt stell.
Leveres i frokost, middag og kaffe-stell.

FIGGJO FAJANSE[®]

The advertisement features a central illustration of a table setting on a dark, round table. The setting includes a large white plate with a gold rim, a smaller white plate, a white cup and saucer, a white pitcher, and a white bowl. A man in a tuxedo and a woman in a dress are standing behind the table, smiling. The man is pointing towards the table. The background is a light, textured color. The text 'HELLE / SORT' is at the top left, and '8-3514 H3' is at the top right. The signature 'sorgria' is visible near the bottom right of the table setting. The slogan '- en ekstra spiss på festbordet ...' is written in a cursive font below the table. The Figgjo Flint logo, consisting of the letters 'FF' in a stylized, blocky font, is on the left. Below it is the text 'FIGGJO FLINT'. On the right, there is a block of text in Norwegian. At the bottom, the text 'FIGGJO FAJANSE[®]' is written in a bold, serif font.

Figure 13-5: Advertisement for Figgjo's service *Eidsvoll Helle/sort*. The *Eidsvoll* model was launched in 1951 and had a very conventional and traditionalistic design. This image was attempted modified by means of a new and simpler decor introduced in 1956 portrayed as "modern, simple and stylish". Decor design: Rolf Frøyland. This advertisement appeared in *Bonytt* three times in 1957.

modernist designs appeared in issues where the company received editorial mention.¹⁹ The first of these was a 1957 special issue in English in connection with an export campaign and had a cover designed by Hermann Bongard, who at that time had just started working for Figgjo, and the second one had some Figgjo vases designed by Bongard on the cover in the occasion of the designer having received the Lunning Prize for 1957. It is thus tempting to speculate if these advertisements were more or less requested by the magazine more than placed by the company. Such speculations are substantiated by the fact that the rest of Figgjo's advertisements in *Bonytt* in the 1950s were for their traditionalistic *Eidsvoll* model with various naturalistic floral decors.²⁰

Despite these attempts at diversifying the assortment by means of variations in decor types, the fact remains that all the services based on the *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg* models were highly traditionalistic and conventional in character. The names alone are filled with tradition, respect and ceremony connected to Norwegian history, identity and image. Eidsvoll is the name of a small town some 65 km north of Oslo. It was grew up around an iron mill in the seventeenth century, and Norway's first railroad was built from Oslo to Eidsvoll. It also happened to be the place where Ragnar Grimsrud grew up. But since 1814, when the nation's constitution was drawn up here, the name has ceased to be merely a geographic and organizational entity—the word has become the very epitome of Norway, sovereignty, national pride, history and identity. Jarlsberg is the name of an estate in Tønsberg, southwest of Oslo which the king of Denmark in the late seventeenth century made one of only three aristocratic estates in Norway. The counts of Jarlsberg played important roles in Norwegian state administration, diplomacy, culture, industry and commerce, and the name has become a symbol of *noblesse* and *grandeur* in a nation otherwise very much deficient in such traditions. Today, it also happens to be the name of a cheese.

By naming their two first highly traditionalistic and historicising service models *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg*, Figgjo thus loaded their identity with very strong emotional content intended to strike a chord in the public regarding their sense of proud national history and noble traditions. The symbolism becomes even more evident and targeted when combined with the names of the decors: A service called *Eidsvoll Vårblomst* (spring flower) can hardly have been intended to symbolize anything but “national beauty”, and *Jarlsberg Marie* might very well allude to “the noble housewife”. In line with such allusions, *Jarlsberg Marie* was marketed as something which would bring pride and elegance to the home and housewife alike: “A service You will truly be proud to have in Your home.—Made from controlled quality goods. Delicate form and decor in pastel green and gold.”²¹ One advertisement was even illustrated by a drawing of a

19. Jens von der Lippe, “Norwegian Ceramics” in *Bonytt*, No. 5, 1957, p 109, Håkon Stenstadvoll, “Lunningsprisen [sic] 1958 [sic] til Hermann Bongard” in *Bonytt*, No. 3, 1958, p 49-52 and Jens von der Lippe, “De engstelige i nord og de modige i syd” in *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1959, p 208

20. See e.g., *Bonytt*, No. 5-6, 1952, p vi and *Bonytt*, No. 11-12, 1953, p xxx

21. -*det er Marie denne gang*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1953—Figgjo archive) (“Et servis som De virkelig vil være stolt av å ha i Deres hjem.—Laget av kontrollerte kvalitetsvarer. Delikat form og dekor i pastell-grønt og gull.”)

proud and happy artist posing alongside his “creation”—accompanied by the slogan “Colour and form for refined taste...” [Figure 13-6].²²



Figure 13–6: Advertisement for Figgjo’s service *Jarlsberg Marie*. Nostalgic design presented as the epitome of artistry and refinement: “-colour and form for refined taste...”. This is a good example of an *invented tradition*—heritage, elegance and noblesse made affordable and available to the common man (or rather woman). (Facsimile of advertisement in Figgjo archive)

With World War II and the German occupation only a few years away, national sentiment and romanticizing historicism stood strong in Norway. But, as we have seen earlier, the design community stopped quite abruptly discussing matters regarding specific national character in form, decor and style around 1950. In this connection, it is

22. *Marie frokost- og middagsstell*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1953—Figgjo archive) (“Farge og form for kresen smak...”)

interesting to note that while the model names of the Figgjo services were highly nationalistic, their design, decor and decor names were not. The conventional, traditionalistic and historicising design and decor referred not to national, but to international—or perhaps non-national—conventions, traditions and history.

Although the naming strategy of the Figgjo *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg* services conforms with the British design historian Jonathan M. Woodham's assertion that "[t]his 'sentimental longing for past times' is... closely bound up with notions of tradition and national identity", the decor and product design is more in line with his remark that "[m]uch nostalgic imagery... and surface decoration applied to so many products is tied to a past which is characterized by non-specific space and time."²³

This non-contextual and non-authentic character of traditionalistic design is in the case of the Figgjo *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg* services enhanced due to two particular facts: Through its script, the design alludes "traditional porcelain". Problem number one is that Figgjo did not manufacture porcelain, but earthenware. Problem number two is that Figgjo was a brand new, modern and highly industrialized factory, and had thus no tradition of their own to allude to. What we have here, then, can best be described as what the British historian Eric Hobsbawm has termed "the invention of tradition".²⁴

The French sociologist Jean Baudrillard has offered a class perspective on this phenomenon, observing that the present and the future is the time of the avant-garde, and that "the transcendent past... is the preserve of the well-to-do and their acquired culture", leaving the general public of less economic and cultural capital with "an indefinite past". They "live in a time which is not theirs, a time of generality, of insignificance, the time of that which is not modern but yet not antique (and, no doubt, never will be antique)".²⁵ Although Baudrillard's Marxist analysis seem rather fatalistic, it is hard to disavow his point that an affinity with "an indefinite past" requires less effort, knowledge and leisure—i.e. cultural capital—than a mastery of "the transcendent past" of antiques and the present/future of the avant-garde. However, his model leaves something to be desired in explaining the fact that there is a considerable acceptance among the lower middle strata of society of what might be called non-avant-garde modern design; the moderate modernism. (This phenomenon is the topic of the next section.)

The practice of employing formal elements from historic styles in contemporary design is often connoted to the historicist styles of the nineteenth century. Traditionalistic and nostalgic (ornamental) design has, however, been highly present throughout the entire twentieth century as well in various styles, versions and nuances.²⁶ It is also instructive to remind oneself that this design exercise that the American architectural historian Brent C. Broolin calls "the Borrowing Tradition"—in various degrees and extent—"is surely as old as the second artisan."²⁷

23. Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 205-211

24. Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) p 1-14. For a fascinating discussion of the ambivalent relations to the past in contemporary cultures, see: David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

25. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996) p 151-152

26. Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Ornament* (London: Studio Vista, 1990)

You do not have to be an expert to tell a modern, industrially manufactured earthenware service in traditionalistic design from an authentic antique china service. But traditionalistic design is probably more about *allusion* than about *illusion*. Writing of bakelite products designed to imitate other materials, the American design historian Jeffrey L. Meikle maintains that

Few so-called imitations actually resembled what they purported to copy. During the 1920s and 1930s moulders did produce credible imitations of marble—if viewed from a distance. The vast majority of imitative mouldings were meant to simulate wood, however, and their solid browns and dark mottles and swirls proved wholly inadequate to the task. The smooth dark brown surface of a gothic clock functioned (as did its architectonic form) as a stylized reminder of what it formerly would have been. Stylization domesticated an object by enabling it to blend in with traditional surroundings but did not disguise its radically unnatural or non-traditional surfaces.²⁸

Earthenware with floral tracing decor might have resembled handpainted china more than bakelite resembled wood, but Meikle’s point is just as valid here: We must be careful not to understand all traditionalistic designs merely as imitations pretending to be something they are not. This is the interpretation that has led modernist chroniclers to condemn traditionalistic design as deceptive, fraudulent and thus immoral. Both the producer and the consumers knew very well that the Figgjo *Jarlsberg Marie* was not antique china, but its design represented real meanings and values for both parts nonetheless. Acknowledging the distinction between illusion and allusion, then, becomes important to reach a wider and less prejudiced understanding of this widespread practice.

Still, the topic of authenticity and contextuality becomes highly relevant and interesting in discussions on design ideology. Even more so, perhaps, in the sphere of architecture, something which the Norwegian architectural historian Siri Skjold Lexau has fascinatingly demonstrated. Her findings indicate that “invented traditions” in terms of architecture designed by means of a deliberately eclectic use of history and tradition deprived of authenticity and context in various ways both fail to *and* succeed in creating the notions of familiarity and reassurance which they strive for.²⁹

Nostalgic design such as the Figgjo *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg* services might of course—and often is, in fact, at least by many orthodox design historians—seen as conservative, reactionary, cowardly and opportunistic product development dissenting from the modernist gospel. An early Norwegian example of this attitude can be found in a 1964 *Bonytt* article entitled “Quality Today—Antiquities Tomorrow” (Kvalitet i dag—antikviteter i morgen”) by art historian Alf Bøe where he more or less juxtaposed *modernism* and *quality*:

[H]ow many rococo-imitated coffee services does the [silversmith] company David-Andersen sell for each of Thorbjørn Lie-Jørgensen’s [modern] models, which are superior

27. Brent C. Brolin, *Architectural Ornament—Banishment and Return* [Revised edition of *Flight of Fancy*, 1.ed. 1985] (London: W.W. Norton, 2000) p 244

28. Jeffrey L. Meikle, “Into the Fourth Kingdom: Representations of Plastic Materials, 1920-1950” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1992 p 174

29. Siri Skjold Lexau, *Mind the Gap—Mellomposisjoner i samtidarkitekturen* (Oslo: Akribes, 2000)

in form and quality?³⁰

It is not quite clear who Bøe blamed the most—the manufacturers, the public or the cultural educators—but it is evident that his professional interest was restricted to what he considered to be “genuinely” modern (alongside “genuine antiquities”)—“fake antiquities” had no place in his world. Unquestionably, much has happened to design history since 1964, but the conspicuous absence of nostalgic and traditionalistic design has lingered on in many newer design histories of the 20th century.³¹ However, this omnipresent phenomenon is far too important and influential to be discarded or ignored. Woodham, as one of very few who has raised this issue, points to the continuous popularity and impact of nostalgic design throughout the entire twentieth century as an indication that easy categorizations of taste and period should be avoided.³² We must, as the German design historian Reiner Wick has argued, acknowledge the “simultaneousness of the unsimultaneous”.³³ Similarly, the British design historian, writer and critic Peter Dormer stated that “It is misleading to overstate the dominance of one design style over another in Western capitalist society.”³⁴ Another British design historian, John Heskett, has stated that the major flaw of the many design histories with a modernist bias is “that they ignore, dismiss or even deride a range of other tendencies, values and approaches which coexisted with the ideals they [the historians] advocated.”³⁵

While the criticism raised against much orthodox and conformist design history has been highly appropriate and timely, reversing the arguments and vantage points is not, in my opinion, any satisfactory alternative. Some scholars of material culture, like e.g. the Norwegian sociologist Kjetil Rolness, have made nostalgia, camp and kitsch the object of praise and approval equally panegyric and biased—although now reassuringly protected behind the veil of irony—to that of even the most orthodox and conformist design historian.³⁶ Rolness has claimed that writing a sober and unbiased cultural history requires that “one does not read the Bible like a christian.”³⁷ It is my conviction that it is equally essential to refrain from reading the Bible like the devil. As the German design historian Gert Selle has argued:

[T]he observer seriously concerned with cultural empathy must detach himself from the

-
30. Alf Bøe, “Kvalitet i dag—antikviteter i morgen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 91 (“hvor mange rokokkoimiterte kaffeserviser selger firmaet David-Andersen for hver av Thorbjørn Lie-Jørgensens modeller, som i form og kvalitet rager over?”)
31. As the British design historian Judy Attfield has observed: “The fact is that design which recalls the past has proved extremely popular cannot be ignored; yet few writers have attempted to explain the phenomenon in terms of popular culture. And as for the specialist literature on the history of design, the impact of the taste for archaism has been ignored as an aberration”: Judith Attfield, *Wild Things—The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000) p 228
32. Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 205
33. Rainer Wick, “Critical observations and general remarks about design history” in Anty Pansera (ed.), *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L’Arca, 1988) p 46
34. Peter Dormer, *The Meanings of Modern Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990) p 23
35. John Heskett, “Industrial Design” in Hazel Conway (ed.), *Design History—A Student’s Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987) p 122
36. See e.g. Kjetil Rolness, *Vulgær og vidunderlig—En studie i utsøkt dårlig smak* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1992)
37. Kjetil Rolness, *Med smak skal hjemmet bygges—Innredning av det moderne Norge* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995) p 9 (“man ikke leser Bibelen som en kristen.”)

old kitsch concept *and* must avoid personal entanglement in the Camp esthetic, because anchorings hamper perception of the socio-esthetic facts.³⁸

In stead of resorting to simplistic approaches dominated by either dismissal/ignorance or praise, I believe that nostalgic design can be much more rewardingly interpreted as a result of and a contribution to a process of negotiation between the designers and manufacturers on one side and the public, users and consumers on the other—with the objects themselves, the marketers, wholesalers and retailers in various intermediate positions. The French sociologists of technology Bruno Latour and Madeleine Akrich have developed a quite elaborate vocabulary for analysing such processes of negotiation.³⁹

Applying the perspective and vocabulary of Latour and Akrich to the topic at hand can provide interesting insight and promote a more nuanced stance: The designers and manufacturers—in our case Ragnar Grimsrud and the rest of the management at Figgjo—seem to have felt that a large part of the public, users and consumers had formed an *anti-programme* to much modernist design: They had *de-inscribed* (rejected, not subscribed to) the values and meanings—the *sociotechnological script*—*inscribed* in the modernist products by designers, manufacturers and marketers. Nostalgic designs like the Figgjo *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg* services may thus be seen as a *re-inscription*, as the designers' and manufacturers' response to the perceived anti-programme to the abstract aesthetics idiom of modernist design.

13.4 Coloured clay: credibility *and* commerciality

The popularity of traditionalistic, nostalgic products like *Jarlsberg Marie* throughout the fifties demonstrates that Figgjo was absolutely right in assuming that a large part of the public, users and consumers had preferences and taste that differed considerably from those of Ragnar Grimsrud and the design community. But although the size of the market share which conformed to nostalgic design was vast, it was far from universal or undisputed.

As we have seen, Grimsrud proclaimed that “[the factory’s production] can not be more homogeneous than the public for which one produces. One must offer “something for everyone”.⁴⁰ Hence, they had to cater to the rest of the market as well. Grimsrud also satisfactorily stated in retrospect at the end of the decade that “[t]he attentive public

38. Gert Selle, “There is No Kitsch, There is Only Design!” in *Design Issues* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1984, p 50

39. See e.g. Madeleine Akrich, “The De-Description of Technical Objects” in Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (eds.), *Shaping Technology / Building Society—Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) p 205-224, Bruno Latour, “Where Are the Missing Masses?—The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts” in Bijker and Law (eds.), *op.cit.* p 225-258 and Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies” in Bijker and Law (eds.), *op.cit.* p 259-264. See also the discussion of script analysis in Chapter 4.

40. Ragnar Grimsrud, “Produsenten har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 188 (“[Fabrikkens produksjon] kan ikke bli mer homogent enn det publikum en produserer for. En er nødt til å bringe “noe for enhver”.”)

here at home has grown plentiful since the war.”⁴¹ By “attentive”, he naturally meant attentive to design expressions similar to those according to his own modernist convictions. In other words: The seemingly lamentable task of offering “something for everyone” did also include designing products of a more modernist appearance and nature, aimed at “the attentive public” capable of appreciating them.

The postwar recovery and budding consumer society had, in other words, produced a flair for expressive aesthetics of highly different representations. As Jonathan Woodham asserts, it seems to be no coincidence that the public preoccupation with appearances received increased interest in this decade: “the move away from austerity to affluence during the course of the 1950s brought with it a new climate of ornamental indulgence, both traditional and “contemporary”.”⁴²

Not only was the market very heterogeneous in terms of taste and preferences—the newspaper coverage of this theme reveals a confusing battle for hegemony regarding the power and authority to define the trends and deliver analyses of where the winds of change were about to blow, resulting in at times contradictory forecasts. In a report from the 1953 annual meeting of the National Association of Glassware and Crockery Merchants (Glass- og steintøyhandlernes Landsforbund), for instance, president Chr. Norevik was said to claim that

there might be those who ask for [the modern applied art designs (*brukskunstformene*)], and there is an interest in them, but not much purchase. It is often so that the forms are too *outré*, and besides it is difficult to start series production which may make them cheaper. The old designs in a more moderated version, on the other hand, succeed well. On the whole there seems to be a turning away from the chilly functionalism which here in our region was rather extreme.⁴³

These rather curious remarks on the manufacturability of modern designs in general and the nature of Norwegian/Nordic functionalism probably reflect merchant Norevik’s own level of knowledge, personal preferences and agenda more than the realities of industrial production and contemporary cultural history. But it is interesting to see how in his mind, modern design lacked public appeal and commercial success due to cultural and economic elitism.

The manufacturers, on the other hand, seemed to take a more pragmatic stance, but still with an evident agenda. Stavangerflint’s general manager Trygve Brekke stated in an interview with a local newspaper that “[n]ow it turns out that people’s taste heads towards gold and flowers, something which requires three bakings of the products.”⁴⁴ He

41. Ragnar Grimrud interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 18 (“Det våkne publikum er blitt tallrikt hos oss siden krigen.”)

42. Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Ornament* (London: Studio Vista, 1990) p 194

43. Chr. Norevik referred in N.N., “Brukskunst i steintøy-bransjen slå ikke godt an hos publikum” in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 14.09.1953 (“det nok er de som spør etter [de moderne brukskunstformene], og det er interesse for dem, men det blir lite kjøp. Det er ofte slik at formene er for outrerte, og dessuten er det vanskelig å gå igang med serieproduksjon som kan gjøre dem billigere. De gamle former i en mere moderert form slår derimot godt igjennom. I det hele tatt synes det å være en svingning bort fra den kjølige funksjonalisme som hos oss var temmelig ytterliggående.”)

44. Trygve Brekke interviewed in N.N., “folks smak i fjanse forandres” in *Iste Mai*, 05.03.1954 (“Nå viser det seg at folks smak går mere i retning av gull og blomster, noe som gjør at varen må brennes tre ganger.”)

thus contradicts Norevik by saying that the traditionalist, nostalgic designs which normally were adorned with gold and flowers, made the production process more complicated, laborious and expensive.

A third position is found in one of the time-typical reports from “life at the modern factory”. No voices are identified here, but the tone and wording is revealing:

As in most areas, the whims of fashion affect the earthenware industry as well... It is a blessing, though, that the taste gradually heads more and more towards the simple and elegant, even if it takes a while for everyone to follow.⁴⁵

This attitude, with its optimism and hopefulness on behalf of the long yearned for redemption of the broader public in terms of its approval of modern design, is—as we have seen earlier—very characteristic of the more pragmatically minded fractions of the applied art community. As this section of the report was from a visit at Figgjo, suggesting that it was the views and thoughts of Figgjo’s own design manager Ragnar Grimsrud which were mediated here is thus no hazardous guess. Anyhow, it would not be far off the mark, considering Figgjo’s decision to launch products designed much more in line with modernist ideals complementary to their assortment of traditionalist, nostalgic products.

Figgjo’s first service model which can be said to adhere to a modernist idiom, in that it—especially combined with its most common decor alternative—was equipped with quite moderate and abstract ornamentation, came about in 1951. The model, with serial number 300, was named *Sola* after a district in the vicinity of Figgjo. Unlike Eidsvoll and Jarlsberg, however, *Sola* has no strong symbolic meaning connoted to national myth or heritage—it was simply the name of a normal, nearby rural district in a rapidly modernizing part of the country. An unpretentious name for an unpretentious product. Like with *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg*, several decors were offered on the *Sola* model, but the one which turned out to be the most popular was a rather unconventional one called *Grete* [Figure 13-7].

The forms of the *Sola* model are quite simple and modest. They suggest an interesting intermediate position between the classical and the modern. The design appears familiar and friendly, but at the same time modern and untraditional. The rounded corpuses give a somewhat heavy-set impression, but the abstracted forms still lend an air of lightness to the overall impression. *Sola* does also recall the formal language Grimsrud applied to one of his most central works at Egersund Fayancefabrik, the service *Åsa* from 1934. The pitchers from this service has the same sturdy, round and friendly shapes that the *Sola* corpuses portrays. The *Sola* design can hardly be called revolutionary—quite the contrary, given its familiarity with a work carried out 17 years earlier.

A peculiar decorative trait of the *Sola* model is the relief ribbons in cable rib pattern which ornate the rims of plates and cups, disrupting the smoothness of the surface. The broken lines of the handles and the swellings towards the top of the jugs and pots also

45. N.N., “Kopper, mugger og tallerkener på løpende bånd” in *Christiansands Tidende*, 21.05.1954 (“Som på de fleste områder. griper motens luner også inn i fajanseindustrien... Et gode er det imidlertid at smaken etterhvert går mer og mer i retning av det enkle og stilfulle, selv om det tar sin tid før alle følger etter.”)

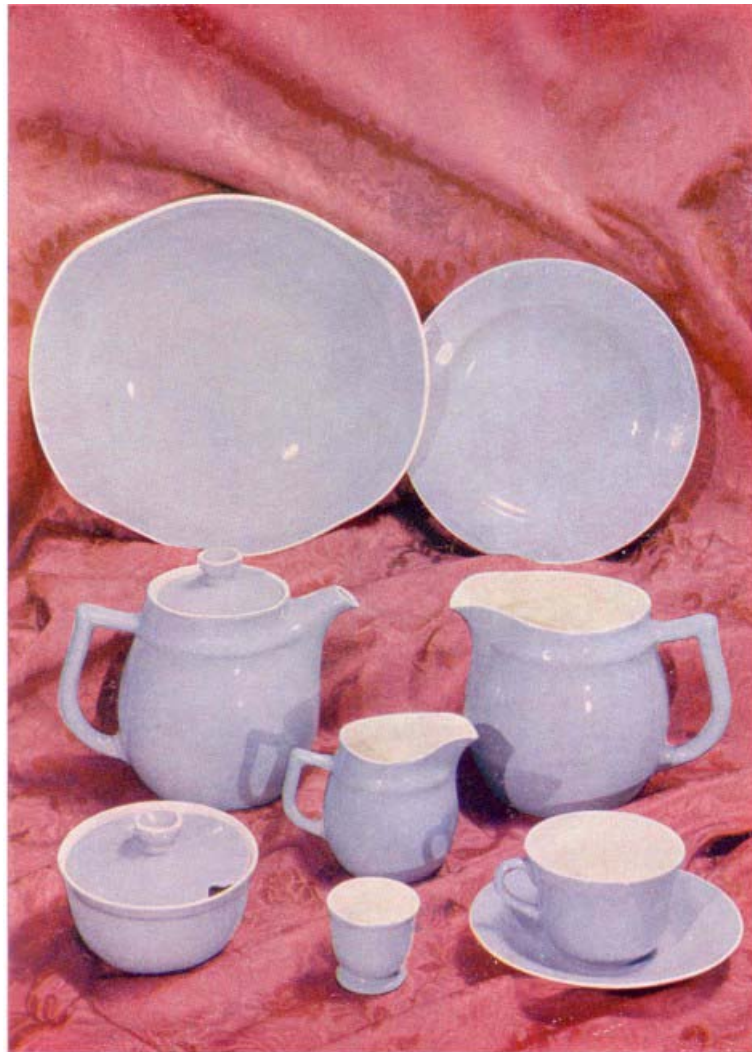


Figure 13–7: Parts from the service model number 300, *Sola* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1951. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decor: *Grete*. (Facsimile from catalogue in Figgjo archive)

contribute to an awkwardness of the design. There is something almost unbalanced and unresolved about the dimensions, shapes and detailing of the *Sola* model.

Sola Grete was the first product utilizing the new decor technique discussed above—coloured clay mass coating, or *engobe* decor. The technique meant spraying unbaked products with liquid, coloured clay mass, resulting in continuous coloured surfaces.⁴⁶ *Grete* was available in a range of pastels: Blue, yellow, green, and pink. Pastels were highly fashionable throughout the fifties, and the market embraced *Grete* from the start.⁴⁷ The green and pink versions were perhaps too fashionable, because they were the first to be discontinued, while the blue and yellow variants remained in production until 1965—something which is quite remarkable, considering the number and nature of new models Figgjo introduced during *Grete*'s life span.⁴⁸

46. Ragnar Grimsrud, *Flintvare* (Internal memo, undated—Figgjo archive)

47. N.N., “Norsk ildfast porselen på norske bord” in *Morgenbladet*, 30.11.1954

It is a plausible speculation that this ornamental use of colour greatly contributed to the commercial success of *Grete*, as plates and cups in cheerful colours might have satisfied what was incessantly perceived as the general public's flare for joy and cosiness. From the manufacturer's point of view, engobe decor was far more desirable than traditional decor techniques because it was much more rational and cost-efficient in production.⁴⁹ Furthermore; since colour was a type of ornament which did not borrow explicitly from history or nature, it was not banished by the design community.⁵⁰ A fortunate trinity of successful design, one might say.

However, it seems that Figgjo and Grimsrud did not quite have faith in the market's acceptance of the modernist *Grete* decor. They did not dare to put all their eggs in one basket, so they offered nostalgic, naturalistic, traditionalistic decors on the *Sola* service model as well—such as the *Bjørø* and *Markblomst* decors [Figure 13-8]. Whereas



Figure 13–8: Parts from the service model number 300, *Sola* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1951. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Left: Decor: *Bjørø*. Right: Decor: *Markblomst*. (Facsimiles from catalogue in Figgjo archive)

48. Notes from the Figgjo company museum (Figgjo archive)

49. Although even this decor technology could become problematic—in 1959, sales manager Harald Torgersen reported that they had discovered difficulties regarding colour variations in the glaze, resulting in return of *Sissel* products: Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 07.09.1959 (Figgjo archive)

50. A remarkable example of how the design community embraced *Grete* is that it was the service chosen when *Bonytt* presented the ideal breakfast table arrangement for a farmhouse kitchen—flanked by e.g. the celebrated J. Tostrup silver plate cutlery *Korsmo*: Signe Sandbu, “Kjøkkenet på gården” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 23

naturalistic floral decors can be considered appropriate on the nostalgic model design of Eidsvoll and Jarlsberg, such decors seem quite awkward paired with the rather modernist formal language of the *Sola* model.⁵¹ None of these survived nearly as long *Grete* blue and yellow, and since Figgjo's product range did not exactly lack alternatives for those who preferred nostalgic, naturalistic, traditionalistic design, one might in hindsight say that decors such as *Bjørg* and *Markblomst* were superfluous and miscalculations—even design mistakes, perhaps.

When inscribing the script of *Bjørg* and *Markblomst*, Figgjo anticipated from the consumers a flair for naturalistic floral decors even on a modern design model such as *Sola*. This prescription—the morally anticipated attitude or behaviour—did not conform to the consumers' actual attitude or behaviour, and hence resulted in a gap between intention and interpretation. The majority of the consumers de-inscribed the *Bjørg* and *Markblomst* versions of the *Sola* model, and subscribed to the *Grete* version.⁵²

The success of *Sola Grete* must have been very encouraging to Ragnar Grimsrud, because he redeveloped the basic ideas behind it into a new service model, *Morgedal*—series number 400, launched in 1954. The varying popularity of the decor alternatives offered on the *Sola* model seems to have taught Figgjo a lesson, because *Morgedal* was only available with coloured clay mass coating—an *engobe* decor named after Grimsrud's daughter Sissel. Like *Grete*, *Sissel* came in various pastel colours—blue, yellow and green [Figure 13-9].

Grimsrud justified the design of a new, more refined and thoroughly modernist service model by asserting that the market potential for this type of product had increased considerably over the three years which had passed since the launch of the *Grete* service—a development which he attributed to the propaganda work by the applied art associations:

[T]he taste seems to turn in a more modern direction, and here we may say that the Applied Art Association's educational work starts to yield results... And we are of course glad to see that.⁵³

Like *Sola Grete*, *Morgedal Sissel* had an elevated relief ribbon decor along the rims. The cable rib pattern of the *Sola* relief had for *Morgedal* been replaced by a chain of small rhombic elements. The real novelty of the latter version of the relief, though, was that its elevated surface was polished or scratched in order to remove the coloured clay mass coating from the relief and reveal the white mass underneath.⁵⁴ This made the decor

51. Figgjo was not the sole practitioner of this curious procedure; at Porsgrund, the service model *Spire* was offered with a standard naturalistic floral decor strangely at odds with the model design. The original *Spire*, designed by Konrad Galaaen in 1952 was praised both by contemporary critics and later by historians as an exquisite example of modern design, much because its only explicitly decorative element was a relief of highly stylized straws along the rims—a decor that was claimed not only respected the white splendour of the porcelain, but actually accentuated it. All the more interesting, then, that the manufacturer felt it commercially opportune or necessary to offer a version with naturalistic floral decor as well.

52. For an introduction to these script-derived terms, see: Akrich and Latour, *op.cit.*

53. Ragnar Grimsrud, interviewed in N.N., "Økt omsetning ved Figgjo i 1954—Publikums smak svinger i moderne retning" in *Stavangeren*, 31.12.1954 ("[s]maken synes å svinge over i mer moderne retning, og her kan vi vel si at Brukskunstforeningens opplysningsvirksomhet begynner å vise resultater... Og det er vi selvsagt glad for.")



Figure 13–9: Parts from the service model number 400, *Morgedal* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1954.
Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decor: *Sissel*. (Presentation photo from Figgjo archive)

ribbon more explicitly ornamental, but also far more clean-cut and clarified compared to the rather blurred and inarticulate character of the *Sola* relief.

Also the model design underwent considerable changes from *Sola* to *Morgedal*, although the basic design programme is more or less the same. If we juxtapose corresponding items from the two services, this development becomes evident [Figure 13-10]. It is quite remarkable to see just how drastic the changes are in terms of modelling quality, level of detailing and finish. The resemblance of concept and programme is indisputable, but so is the difference in refinement and execution. One plausible explanation for this remarkable change is that the development Figgjo underwent in terms of management, organization, structure, staff, technology, production methods, logistics, etc. was—as we have seen—also quite remarkable during the few years separating the *Grete* and *Sissel* services.

It may seem that *experience*—in all parts of the organization and production run—is the key to understanding the process leading from one design to the other. Hence, *Morgedal Sissel* may be seen as a redesign of *Sola Grete*, where Figgjo and Grimsrud reinscribed the product based on the experiences earned from the former model in order to make the prescriptions and proscriptions of the new service correspond better with the

54. Ragnar Grimsrud, *Flintvare* (Internal memo, undated—Figgjo archive)



Figure 13–10: Model design development from *Sola Grete* (Left), 1951 to *Morgedal Sissel* (Right), 1954. (Photos from Figgjo archive)

subscriptions of the consumers as well as those of other actants, such as e.g. the various contributors to the production run.

Both the company and the designer was, understandably enough, very proud of the advances they had made, embodied in the new *Sissel* service. It also brought about more respect and acknowledgment in the design community. When Ragnar Grimsrud was invited to present and describe the manufacturer’s view on the design process in the 1955 *Bonytt* special issue on tableware, the article illustrations started with two large photos of *Sissel*—deferring companies like Gustavsberg, Porsgrund, Alumina and Stavangerflint to secondary positions.⁵⁵ Here, *Sissel* was described as portraying “simple lines and decor well suited to the material.”⁵⁶

Sissel had its “coming out party” at the Applied Art Association in Oslo’s (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) 1954 annual autumnal exhibition, and was well received by the critics. The decorative use of colour surprised and pleased: *Morgenbladet*’s critic, Esther Normann Treider, reported that “Figgjo-flint [sic] has begun presenting their services in delicious pastels”.⁵⁷ Similar testimonial came from another critic: “Figgjo’s

55. Ragnar Grimsrud, “Produsenten har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 186-188

56. *Ibid.* p 186 (“enkle former og dekor som passer for materialet.”)

services in pure pastels are... beautiful in their simplicity.”⁵⁸ *Bonytt* subeditor Liv Schjødt was also satisfied with *Sissel*, but retained a somewhat more reserved tone in her exhibition review for *Arbeiderbladet*: “Here at home things are a bit slow, but we welcome the latest [service] from Figgjo, which is a definite improvement, but there is a long way to go”.⁵⁹ The painter and journalist Tor Refsum seemed to share Schjødt’s somewhat cautious acknowledgment of in his review for *Aftenposten*:

Towards the new exhibitor Figgjo Fayansefabrikk’s [sic] products one still feels uncertain; but I believe they can become popular. They are a bit too “pretty” in the colour and commonplace in the ornamentation.⁶⁰

These latter reservations notwithstanding, *Sissel* was accepted in the design community and promoted Figgjo to a respected manufacturer also in these circles. *Sissel* was promoted in *Bonytt*. *Sissel* was shown at exhibitions by the Applied Art Associations in Oslo, Stavanger and Trondheim.⁶¹ Suddenly, Figgjo was welcomed in high circles, even chosen for foreign representation: They participated in the 1954 to 1957 grand missionary tour of North America, *Design in Scandinavia*, and some white plates with simple, relief decor was selected for the official Norwegian exhibit at the *X Triennale di Milano* in 1954.⁶²

An intriguing observation in this regard is that the substantial proportion of Figgjo’s production based on nostalgic, traditionalistic design, such as the *Eidsvoll* and *Jarlsberg* models, was neither condemned nor accepted on these occasions—it was simply ignored.⁶³ One might assume that the design community appreciated the fact that these products were necessary for Figgjo to survive, but they did not want to know of it. “See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil”.

57. Esther Normann Treider, “Wallboard og Windsor i Brukskunst” in *Morgenbladet*, 11.08.1954 (“Figgjo-flint [sic] er gått over til å presentere sine serviser i lekre pastellfarger”)

58. N.N., “Vellykt [sic] brukskunst-mønstring” in *Morgenposten*, 16.08.1954 (“Figgjo’s serviser i rene pastellfarger er... vakre i sin enkelhet.”)

59. Liv Schjødt, “Brukskunst-status” in *Arbeiderbladet*, 21.08.1954 (“Her hjemme går det noe trådt, men vi er glad [sic] for de [sic] siste [servise] fra Figgjo, som er en avgjort forbedring, men det er langt fram”)

60. Tor Refsum, “Brukskunsts høstmønstring” in *Aftenposten*, 04.09.1954 (“Den nye utstiller Figgjo Fayansefabrikks [sic] produkter føler man seg ennå usikker overfor; men jeg tror nok de kan bli populære. De er litt for “pene” i fargen og banale i ornamenteringen.”)

61. N.N., “‘Kjøkkenet som forsvant’ og nattredaksjonsbordet—Morsom utstilling i Brukskunstkjelleren” in *Iste Mai*, 21.11.1954 and N.N., “Ikke lenger moderne med “12 av hvert”” in *Adresseavisen*, 23.11.1954

62. Arne Remlov (ed.), *Design in Scandinavia—An exhibition of objects for the home* (Oslo: Kirstes, 1954) p 116 and Ivan Matteo Lombardo, et al. (eds.), *Catalogo della Decima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1954) p 254

63. The British design historian Alison J. Clarke has noted that the same happened to Tupperware—the MoMA-centred American design elite hailed parts of the range whilst completely ignoring the rest: “Despite claims to the contrary, rational functionality and utility were by no means the sole determinants of Tupperware’s immense commercial success. Some Tupperware forms may have coalesced with a modernist aesthetic but, as the plethora of Econo-Canisters covered with hand-painted floral patterns and whimsical motifs suggests, certain less-austere versions of the Tupperware range (excluded from the professional design press and the exhibits of elitist museums) more aptly fulfilled the desires of many a non-rational 1940s consumer.”: Alison J. Clarke, *Tupperware—The Promise of Plastic in 1950’s America* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999) p 53

The fortunate scheme of using colour as ornament continued with *Sissel*, and participated in making it an even bigger hit than *Grete*. *Sissel* became one of the most commercially successful products Figgjo would ever make, and in the latter half of the fifties it found its way into an impressive share of the new and reconstructed, modern Norwegian homes of the period. The high level of demand for *Sissel* continued for more than a decade. Its popularity was not, however, confined to the Norwegian market—it became the company's first really profitable volume export article, and was especially well received in the British market.⁶⁴

Figgjo had taken their first fumbling steps abroad from 1952-53, mainly with *Grete* and a mocha service called *Bjørgvin Margrethe* (series number 550), but on a limited scale [Figure 13-11].⁶⁵ Attempts were made in Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium,



Figure 13-11: Mocha service model number 550, *Bjørgvin* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1953. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decor: *Margrethe*. A peculiar blend of modernist design features (the same exterior pastel colour coating as *Grete* and *Sissel*) and nostalgic/traditionalistic ones (baroque handle design and gold decor). This product was Figgjo's first export article to speak of: The American military canteens in Europe ordered large quantities to use as gifts for the stationed personnel.^a (Facsimile from catalogue and photo from Figgjo archive)

a. N.N., "Figgjo-flint på nye veier—større leveranser hver måned fremover til amerikanske kantiner i Europa" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 24.08.1953

64. Hjørdis Smedvig, "Alltid Sissel til frokost" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 1991 (Date excluded from the clipping—Figgjo archive)

65. N.N., "Figgjo Fajanse har dobla produksjonen sidan i fjor!—250 mann kuytt [sic] til verksemda, som no "luktar" på eksport med tanke på å vinna framtids marknad" in *Rogaland*, 05.04.1952 and N.N., "Figgjo-flint på nye veier—større leveranser hver måned fremover til amerikanske kantiner i Europa" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 24.08.1953

Italy, Switzerland, England and the USA.⁶⁶ They did not achieve any volume to speak of, but did manage to get a foothold in the parts of the markets where design was considered more important than price.⁶⁷ The domestic market was no longer as frantic as it had been in the first postwar years, so export was considered necessary in order to prosper. But tariff barriers made it difficult for Norwegian manufacturers to compete on foreign markets, just as they effectively stalled the competition from imported goods on the domestic market—but this protection was rapidly crumbling from the mid-fifties.⁶⁸ But with *Sissel*, Figgjo managed to establish a substantial and profitable export.

A curious specialized product designed and produced especially for the American market is worth mentioning:

To America we sell something called a television set, where plate and saucer is combined in one oval part, where the cup is placed on the one end and the sandwich on the other so that one do not have to look away from the apparatus whilst eating. The television set is available in 6 colours.⁶⁹

The fact that Figgjo designed and produced a product like this in 1955 is quite remarkable, given the fact that regular television broadcasts did not start until 1961 in Norway.⁷⁰ Grimsrud's elaborate explanation of what their "television set" (not to be confused with TV set) actually was shows that the home market for this product was non-existent.⁷¹ He was obviously proud of this exotic novelty, but stresses that their main export article unquestionably was *Sissel*.⁷²

Sissel's ability to penetrate foreign markets was exploited in the domestic marketing campaigns as well, as evidence of its excellence, alongside other indications of modernity, rationality—and beauty:

A festive setting adds extra zest to the meal... SISSEL is simple, modern and practical. It is sold everywhere, both at home and abroad. You can buy complete services or individual parts. SISSEL is available in three beautiful pastels: Yellow, blue and green.⁷³

66. In New York, Figgjo mounted a permanent sales exhibition in Norway House, but it generated more curiosity than sales: N.N., "Rogalandsfajansen hevder seg godt i konkurransen" in *Rogaland*, 16.01.1954

67. N.N., "Økende eksport fra Figgjo Fajansefabrikk—Konkurransedyktig på eksportmarkedet både i kvalitet og kunstnerisk form", *Stavangeren*, 14.10.1955

68. N.N., "De høye tollsatsene forbyr eksport av Rogalandsfajanse" in *Rogaland*, 31.01.1953

69. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in N.N., "Gode utsikter for 1956 ved Figgjo Fajansefabrikk" in *Stavangeren*, 02.01.1956 ("Til Amerika selger vi noe som kalles televisjon-sett hvor tallerken og underskål til koppen henger sammen på en oval underdel, hvor koppen plasseres [sic] i den ene enden og smørbrødet i en annen slik at man slipper å ta øynene fra apparatet mens man spiser. Televisjon-settet leveres i 6 farger.")

70. Berge Furre, *Norsk Historie 1905-1990* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1993) p 309

71. However, the design community was beginning to discuss the implications TV would have on interior design as well as the design of the apparatus' themselves. See e.g. Liv Schjødt, "Fjernsynet er over oss" in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 194-197

72. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in N.N., "Gode utsikter for 1956 ved Figgjo Fajansefabrikk" in *Stavangeren*, 02.01.1956

73. *Sissel—en festlig ramme*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1955-56—Figgjo archive) ("En festlig ramme setter en ekstra spiss på måltidet... SISSEL er enkelt, moderne og praktisk. Det selges overalt, både innen- og utenlands. De kan få kjøpt hele stell eller deler enkeltvis. SISSEL leveres i tre vakre pastell-farger: Gul, blå og grønn.")

The flexibility offered through selling individual parts of the service as opposed to the customary fixed sets of 45 parts—which Grimsrud derogatorily called “a... traditionalistic unimpeachability”—was a modernist trait in line with the ideals of adapting to the customers’ varying needs and economy—and a convincing sales argument.⁷⁴ The war on the traditional, complete 12-person dinner service had been on for a while in the design community, and arguments were made for more flexible compositions and multi-purpose vessels.⁷⁵ But when such flexibility was offered—e.g. by services such as *Sissel*—the missionaries of modern taste created a new problem: this freedom required “higher demands for sense of style and form”.⁷⁶

Rationalizing arguments based on practicality and economy were important, omnipresent and right up the design community’s alley. The intensive and long-standing scientification of the housework notwithstanding, Figgjo had no hopes of conquering the housewife by reason alone—their strategy was to combine reason with emotion.

One of Figgjo’s attempts at doing so was their participation in the so-called Housewife films (*Husmorfilmene*). When the production company responsible for these films in 1955 made one focusing explicitly on design in collaboration with the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), Figgjo readily jumped on board.⁷⁷ Contributions from manufacturing companies were normal in the Housewife films, as they functioned as advertisements for their products. This commercial aspect was then balanced against the participation of the National Information Bureau for Domestic Science (Statens opplysningskontor for husstell) providing an image of objectivity, rationality and science. To better appeal to the public, the films also included entertainment features. With their unification of information, education, promotion, propaganda, advertisement and entertainment, the Housewife films represent perhaps the most comprehensive and ambitious attempts at swaying the modern housewife—and their main persuasion strategy was to combine reason with emotion.⁷⁸

Another example of how Figgjo strove to combine reason with emotion when inscribing their products can be found in an advertisement for *Sissel*, designed as a simulated letter to the benevolent manufacturer from an enchanted customer [Figure 13-12]:

Dear Figgjo! I have become increasingly aware of the important role beautiful colours play in a home. They are vitamins for the mind. When we arrange a party, we strive to set the table with the correct colours combined correctly, but perhaps it is even more about adding more colours to the usual trot. When I come down in the morning, I cheer up at the breakfast table, and the burdens of the housewife are eased by being able to set a beautiful

74. Ragnar Grimsrud, “Produsenten har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 186 (“en... tradisjonsfestet uangripelighet”)

75. See e.g. Sven Erik Skawonius, “Om spisestell” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 182

76. N.N., “Ikke lenger moderne med “12 av hvert”” in *Adresseavisen*, 23.11.1954 (“større krav til stil- og formsans”)

77. N.N., “70000 har sett Husmorfilmen i Oslo” in *Sandnes & Jærens Avis*, 21.10.1955. Already in 1953, there are reports of a “culture movie” being produced filmed at Figgjo. It is uncertain, but probable that this was an official Housewife film (*Husmorfilm*): N.N., “Kulturfilm i farger tatt opp ved Figgjo Fajanse A.s.” in *Iste Mai*, 13.06.1953

78. Anne Marit Myrstad, “You, Me and the Housework. Discussion of the ‘Housewife film’s Compère” in *Nordicom Review*, Vol 25, 2004, No. 1-2, p 215-225

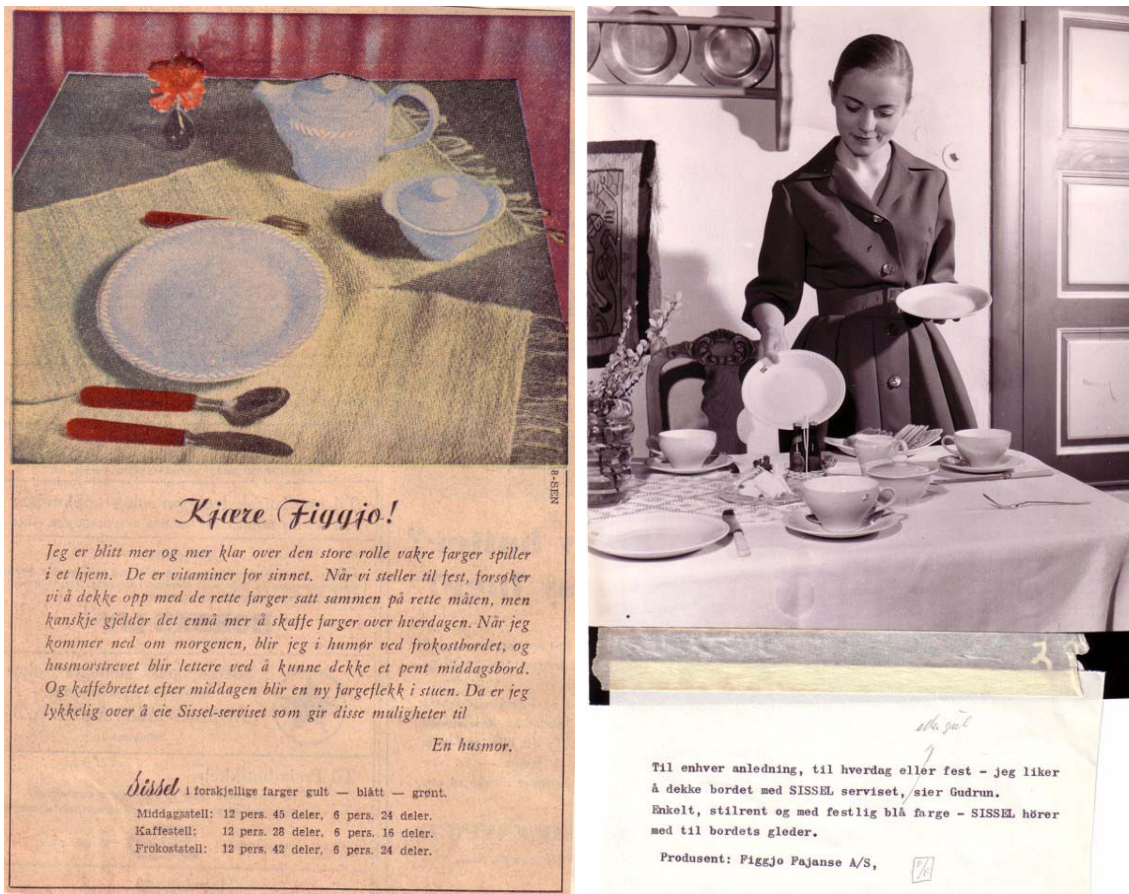


Figure 13–12: Advertisement (left) and proposal for advertisement (right) for Figgjo’s service *Sissel*. The proposed copy (right) reads: “At any occasion, weekday or party—I like to set the table with the SISSEL service, says Gudrun. Simple, in pure style and with festive blue colour—SISSEL belongs to the joys of the table.” (“Til enhver anledning, til hverdag eller fest—jeg liker å dekke bordet med SISSEL serviset, sier Gudrun. Enkelt, stilrent og med festlig blå farge—SISSEL hører med til bordets gleder.”) (Facsimile of advertisement and mock-up for advertisement in Figgjo archive)

dinner table. And the coffee tray after dinner becomes a new colour spot in the living room. Then I am happy about owning the Sissel service which presents these opportunities to—A housewife.⁷⁹

Sissel was, as we can see, inscribed as a package deal: Buy *Sissel*, and it will not only ease your burdens, but bring beauty to your home as well. It was, however, the emotional arguments connoted to beauty, style, elegance, joy and happiness which often dominated and overshadowed the “true”, “honest” and “rational” arguments regarding functionality, flexibility, usability, economy, etc. This divergence is only widened by the fact that these

79. *Sissel—Kjære Figgjo!*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1955–56—Figgjo archive) (“Kjære Figgjo! Jeg er blitt mer og mer klar over den store rolle vakre farger spiller i et hjem. De er vitaminer for sinnet. Når vi steller til fest, forsøker vi å dekke opp med de rette farger satt sammen på rette måten, men kanskje gjelder det ennå [sic] mer å skaffe farger over hverdagen. Når jeg kommer ned om morgenen, blir jeg i humør ved frokostbordet, og husmorstrevet blir lettere ved å kunne dekke et pent middagsbord. Og kaffeboardet etter middagen blir en ny fargeflekk i stuen. Da er jeg lykkelig over å eie Sissel-serviset som gir disse muligheter til—En husmor.”)

user testimonials were, of course, pure fabrications. “Thou shall not bear false witness” was obviously not a commandment slavishly adhered to in Figgjo’s marketing strategy.

However, promoting design as mere style, as being primarily a question of aesthetics for the sake of aesthetics, could hardly be done in 1950s Norway. In a culture where principles of logic, science and rationality were considered the very essence of modern society, even the appreciation of aesthetics as an important aspect of the design process was sought legitimized by calling on the ultimate authority—science:

Cups, saucers and dishes can be considered strictly as utilitarian objects, but there enters into their manufacture an aesthetic element which is probably the most important aspect of the business. Domestic dinnerware is, of course, bought almost exclusively by housewives. However, hotels and other commercial feeding establishments are by far the main consumers and appearance is just as important a consideration with them. The fact is that aesthetics are now recognised to be of primary importance in food service. Physiologists can prove with clinical data what restaurateurs have learnt through experience (and housewives through instinct) that the *appearance* of food has a direct effect upon the appetite, and that the dishes on which the food is served contribute to that appearance to a major degree.⁸⁰

The implicative and stereotypical gendering of consumers displayed here may seem questionable today, but was hardly surprising at the time.⁸¹ The above quoted passage is most likely written by a man, but even a pioneering feminist like Astri Rynning—lawyer, politician and chairman of the National Council of Women (Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd)—stated that “Women are the purchasing managers of the home and hence also judges of taste.”⁸² The gender aspect aside, the most striking feature of this presentation is the effort to turn even the aesthetic aspect of the design process into rational science and thus deliver it from the evils of erraticity and irrationality. Now the

80. N.N., “Tableware in Norway” in *Esso Oilways* Vol. 8, 1956, p 11

81. It is thus essential to appreciate that also notions of gender is subject to the dynamics of historical change. As the British design historian Judy Attfield has pointed out: “[F]eminism has a history of its own and a criticism of 1950s stereotypes made in the 1980s has the benefit of hindsight. Therefore the kind of criticism which suggests that the women of the 1950s allowed themselves somehow to be duped into being housewives devalues their work.”: Judy Attfield, “FORM/female FOLLOWS FUNCTION/male: Feminist Critiques of Design” in John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989) p 216. Another policy statement for a feminist design history is: Cheryl Buckley, “Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1986, p 3-14. A critical reassessment is made in: Carma R. Gorman, “Reshaping and Rethinking: Recent Feminist Scholarship on Design and Designers” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2001, p 72-88. A discussion of genderization in the design of everyday objects can be found in: Pat Kirkham (ed.), *The Gendered Object* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). For a comprehensive historical study of taste as a gendered issue, see: Penny Sparke, *As Long As It's Pink—The Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora, 1995). For a discussion of strategies to bridge “the gender gap between makers and consumers” in 1950s Canadian design, see: Joy Parr, “Shopping for a Good Stove—A Parable about Gender, Design, and the Market” in Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun (eds.), *His and Hers—Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998) p 165-187. See also Regina Lee Blaszczyk, “Cinderella Stories—The Glass of Fashion and the Gendered Marketplace” in Horowitz and Mohun (eds.), *op.cit.* p 139-164. Blaszczyk has applied the same angle, but expanded her scope beyond gender issues in a discussion on how designers, manufacturers and marketers in the glass and ceramics industry have negotiated strategies of catering to the consumers’ tastes, desires and requirements: Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000)

consumers could stop feeling guilty for thinking that aesthetics mattered. Scientific proof based on “clinical data” came to the rescue and made it possible to be both concerned with the aesthetic appearance of a product and modern at heart at the same time.

The third and last of the major service models to sport the engobe decor was *Benta*, launched in 1958 [Figure 13-13]. The model, with series number 1100, was called



Figure 13–13: Parts from the service model number 1100, *Finse* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1958. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decor: *Benta*. (Presentation photo from Figgjo archive)

Finse—and as with *Morgedal* (*Sissel*), *Finse* was only available with one decor, named *Benta* after Ragnar Grimsrud’s youngest daughter.⁸³ *Benta* can easily be seen as a redesign or development of *Sissel*, applying more or less the same design features—albeit with slightly different execution. It used the same decor technique, the coloured clay mass coating, but applied to more restricted areas—the vertical outsides of the vessels and only the flange of the flatware. Also like *Sissel*, *Benta* as well had an elevated relief ribbon decor along the rims, but in the shape of two parallel, dotted lines. The basic shapes of the model was not altered much, except for parts like the tea and

82. Astri Rynning, “En sjanse—og en utfordring” in *Velkommen til bords* [promotion/education/information booklet] (Oslo: Bransjerådet for glass, porselen og stentøy, ca 1961) (Figgjo archive) (“Kvinner er hjemmets innkjøpssjefer og dermed også smaksdommere.”)

83. A traditionalistic decor called *Florafford* was developed for the *Finse* model, but it was discontinued already in 1959: Minutes from management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 7/12 1959 (Figgjo archive)

coffee pots. The colours, however, were slightly different. While *Sissel* was available in cheerful pastels of blue, green and yellow, *Benta* came in cooler hues, such as gray and greyish green.

It was not just the colours, though, that were intended to be “cooler” than *Sissel* was. *Benta* may be considered an attempt to refine or elevate the design expression of the former model, to make it a more “exclusive” service. *Sissel* was marketed as “simple, modern and practical.”⁸⁴ For *Benta*, this changed to “simple, modern and at the same time highly decorative” [Figure 13-14].⁸⁵ Here, arguments regarding the decorative



Figure 13–14: Advertisements for Figgjo’s service *Benta*. The copy (left) reads: “- Any young wife’s wish dream... is a beautiful service which satisfies the demands one can make of a modern service. The “BENTA” service is simple, modern and at the same time highly decorative. Do You prefer the decor in gray or green? “BENTA” is offered in both colours both as breakfast, dinner and coffee service.” (Facsimile of advertisements in Figgjo archive)

84. *Sissel—en festlig ramme*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1955–56—Figgjo archive) (“enkelt, moderne og praktisk.”)

85. - *enhver ung frues ønskedrøm...*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1958—Figgjo archive) (“enkelt, moderne og samtidig høyst dekorativt.”)

effects of modern design was substituted for those regarding its practicality. But perhaps these moderate alterations in design and marketing rhetoric were not enough, because *Benta* did not become nearly as successful as *Sissel*.⁸⁶ Grimsrud himself said that he designed *Benta* as a possible replacement for *Grete* and *Sissel*, because he assumed that the popularity of the latter would soon diminish.⁸⁷ The fact that *Sissel* outlived its intended replacement shows the unpredictability and challenges of design management.

13.5 Conclusion

This chapter has been an investigation of folksy forms; of design in a setting where the perceived and actual power of the consumer (and their various representatives) is absolutely essential to the development of design and the leeway of designers. It should be clear now that the realities of industrial business and market situation in 1950s' Norway required a whole lot of compromise and pragmatism from designers and managers, but equally so that working under such circumstances might also be invigorating and result in creative solutions that might otherwise have failed to appear.

After an introductory presentation of the very first earthenware product to emerge from the kilns at Figgjo and the argument that this seems to have been some sort of “trial run” of the new factory, this chapter discussed the products that represented the company's major commercial successes in the 1950s. From this perspective, two highly diverging but equally interesting trajectories were identified in terms of design: One that can loosely be dubbed traditionalesque and one that conforms better to the modernist design idiom.

The former seems to have been motivated by invented traditions and notional nostalgia, as the design of these products was based on the (apparently well-founded) assumption that a large proportion of the consumers would prefer products whose design alluded to past styles and symbols of grandeur and familiarity. The latter seems to have taken its cue from the perceived greater appreciation of modern design in the broader public, and is particularly interesting because of the design features employed to bridge professional credibility and business commerciality.

On a more general level, this chapter demonstrates that the history of modern design should not be confined to the history of modernist design. In order to understand how design ideology was transformed in this period it is essential to pay attention not only to the (according to modernist ethic) “good” or “successful” design, but equally so to what the design elite considered “poor” or “unsuccessful” design. After all, the modernist idiom did not by any means reign supreme in design practice, and a design history ignorant of the “heretic” or non-conforming aspects of design practice would be too simplistic and one-dimensional.

86. Ivar Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland kunstnersenter, 1991) p 37

87. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in Petter Tjessheim, “Modellkunstneren” in *Flintråten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 2, No. 3-4, 1957, p 15

The next chapter will also deal with 1950s Figgjo products, but will explore various kinds of projects and designs that for different reasons did not to the same degree contribute to the company's commercial success in the way those discussed above definitely did.

14 Forms of fancy:

Towards a more discerning design practice

14.1 Introduction

The high-volume service series discussed in the previous chapter can be characterised as the bread-and-butter production at Figgjo in the 1950s. But as the company grew and matured in their role as an industrial earthenware factory in course of the decade, various product development projects of a more experimental and specialised nature can be observed. This chapter is devoted to some of these. What can such projects tell us about the practice of and attitude towards design at Figgjo? Do they reflect a more professional and discerning design practice? Or should they primarily be understood as a quest for novelty in an increasingly competitive market place? Despite their many differences in scope, motivation and character, what they have in common is an more pronounced interest in refinement in design. In various way, they might all be said to pay greater attention to forms of fancy.

The first project to be studied is a service with a remarkably novel design. A typical niche product, this model featured many interesting new design features and was portrayed as exceptionally modern and fashionable. When this product failed in the market place, one might ask whether its design actually was *too* modern. The second example of more daring modern design that did not turn in to sales success is a series of experiments with new materials (bone china) and new forms carried out in the mid-1950s. These, however, never made it to commercial production at all.

This chapter also examines another event that also added a new aspect to Figgjo's approach to design; their first cooperation with a consultant designer. By hiring a freelance designer with a high standing in the Norwegian design community, the company can be said to have sought creativity on commission. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the new actor in Figgjo's design work carried out both assignments for the company's mass-production series as well as more experimental projects.

The last part of this chapter sidetracks the investigation of forms of fancy to discuss a more general matter of economic politics and industrial policies; the radical development towards international free trade throughout the 1950s that culminated with the establishment of EFTA in 1960. As we shall see, this process drastically altered the conditions for the manufactured goods industry in Norway—and Figgjo would have to make some quite profound readjustments in order to adapt to the new circumstances.

14.2 *Too modern?* Failure and experiment

Most of the products discussed hitherto, such as *Jarlsberg Marie*, *Sola Grete* and *Morgedal Sissel*, were great commercial successes for Figgjo. But not everything the maturing company touched in the 1950s turned to gold. *Sissel*'s huge popularity must have been a great relief to Grimsrud and Figgjo, demonstrating that products adhering to a modernist aesthetic could in fact become favourites of the general public. The market's acclaim of *Sissel* was the confirmation Grimsrud needed to keep his faith that Figgjo could tone down the nostalgic designs and go for more modern designs.

There are, however, indications that suggest that this exuberance on behalf of modernist aesthetics got the better of them—at least for a while. In 1957, just a couple of years after the introduction of *Sissel*, Figgjo launched a new and highly unconventional service called *Høstløv* (*Autumn Leaves*) [Figure 14-1]. The service model, series number



Figure 14–1: Parts from the service model number 700, *Akershus* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1957. Decor: *Høstløv*. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decor designer: Rolf Frøyland. Right top & bottom: Decor sketches by Frøyland. (Photo and facsimiles of sketches in Figgjo archive)

700, was named *Akershus*. The *Akershus Høstløv* service really stood out, and the designers were truly proud of the result.¹ Both the design strategy, the model design, and

1. Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006

the decor design of this product were remarkably novel—so much so that it might be seen as an excess in novelty and modern aesthetics.

Akershus Høstløv possesses several very intriguing design features. Its plates and saucers have an almost rectangular/squarish shape, giving the service a very distinct character. To obtain this shape, the plates were first made circular by turnery, and then parts of the flange had to be trimmed. Hence, in terms of production technology, there was no reason what so ever to depart from the circular plate—doing so only caused more handling, processing and labour. Grimsrud himself had stated this very fact as clearly and crisply as possible only a couple of years earlier: “The round form is thus technically motivated... We can make different, but not better solutions.”² When he almost immediately after writing these words went along and designed non-circular plates, it is hard to find any other plausible explanation for it than a desire for novel forms for their own sake. Whether this design novelty was rooted in his own personal preferences or if it was an attempt to cater to perceived desires in the marketplace is uncertain.

The decor design of *Høstløv* is also peculiar. In one way, it followed in the steps of *Grete* and *Sissel*, in that it too had an engobe decor—coloured clay mass spray painted onto the objects before baking. The colour options of *Høstløv* was grey-green or yellow. But whereas this coloured engobe decor was the only ornamental feature of *Grete* and *Sissel* (in addition to their relief ribbons), *Høstløv* also featured a novel decorative attribute—a silk-screen print. This was the first silk-screen print produced at Figgjo’s own in-house silk-screen printing office. It was designed by Rolf Frøyland, head of the decor department, and depicted a stylized ribbon of leaves. Not only did the decoration of *Høstløv* require two separate application processes, but because its silk-screen print was applied as an overglaze decor, it also required a third baking—and this third baking of the *Akershus* plates met with additional manufacturing problems.³ Hence, this elaborate decor also contributed to the extra time, materials, processes, intermediate storage space, labour, etc. needed in the production of *Høstløv*.

Rational production and optimal manufacturability are core values of any industrial enterprise, and these principles were exalted to apothegms by the early design ideologists of the modern movement. It should be clear by now, then, that the design of *Høstløv* distinctly disobeyed these doctrines of modernist design ideology. It was, however, not only the product design and the decor design that were at odds with modernist design ideology. The design programme on which *Høstløv* was based, especially as expressed through the marketing, seems to conflict even more fundamentally with basic principles in the modernist ethos.

Unlike e.g. *Sissel*, *Høstløv* was not intended as a flexible, universal, fully-fledged service capable of solving any task posed by the dining requirements of the modern home. Quite the contrary, *Høstløv* was intended as a niche product. It was launched as an “evening service” for entertaining guests or other “occasions”.⁴ Such functions could, of course, perfectly well have been fulfilled by the same service used for breakfast and

2. Ragnar Grimsrud, “Produsenten har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 187 (“Den runde form er altså teknisk begrunnet... Vi kan lage andre, men ikke bedre løsninger.”)

3. Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 06.10.1959 (Figgjo archive)

4. Notes from the Figgjo company museum (Figgjo archive)

dinner—something which means that *Høstløv*'s design programme aimed to create a non-existent function, to awake some latent desire in a market where some consumers now could start toying with the idea of buying products which were not strictly necessary—such as an “evening service”. If one is to take the social rhetoric of orthodox modernist design ideology seriously, this act of constructing non-existent functions with the sole purpose of selling non-essential products is of course dishonourable.

The advertisements for *Høstløv* are characterized by a much heavier emphasis on hedonism than what is the case in contemporary advertisements for other Figgjo products. There are absolutely no references to the product's utilitarian function or technological qualities—aspects which, in varying degree, were always stressed in advertisements for other Figgjo services [Figure 14-2]. One *Høstløv* advertisement



Figure 14–2: Advertisement for Figgjo's service *Akershus Høstløv*. This product is presented as a fashion accessory—modern design as aesthetic hedonism. (Facsimiles of advertisements in Figgjo archive)

boasts that “She too fell for “Høstløv” .. the service in contemporary style”.⁵ Another

one tries to appeal to the generous husband—still without any references to utilitarian function or technological qualities:

When You wish to show Your wife just how much You appreciate her work around the house, what is more natural that to give her something of *truly* great value. *A festive service does the trick...* HØSTLØV, a stylish, elegant and at the same time highly modern service... She will be overjoyed!⁶

It is interesting to note that there seems to be an implicit contradictory state between the terms “stylish, elegant” and “modern”—a contradiction extraordinarily superseded by *Høstløv*. Words like stylish and elegant were widely used to describe the nostalgic designs, such as e.g. *Marie*, while *Sissel* was “simple, modern and practical.”⁷ *Høstløv*, however, managed to be both “stylish, elegant and at the same time highly modern” without ever having to resort to such trivial arguments as simplicity and practicality. But *Høstløv*’s modernity was one of an aesthetic nature. Modern aesthetic was given precedence over modern manufacturability. Hence, *Høstløv* represents modernism as style rather than as design ideology.

Whether the consumers saw *Høstløv* as an excess in modernist aesthetics, or simply not considered it sufficiently useful or desirable, is hard to tell. But whatever the reason, the fact remains that *Høstløv* became a commercial failure.⁸ Perhaps it was indeed too modern—or just too stylish?

Another project from the mid-fifties which yielded no commercial benefit, but on the other hand resulted in valuable technological knowledge as well as some very interesting aesthetic properties, was the bone china experiments [Figure 14-3].⁹ Why any series production of bone china never came about or if this was even considered, is not known. However, neither before nor after the Figgjo experiments has there been any manufacture of bone china products in Norway. This variant is the standard in English china production, but the only traces of it on Scandinavian ground has been a limited production at Gustavsberg in Sweden.¹⁰ The only traditional china factory in Norway—Porsgrund—as well as most of the other Scandinavian and continental china factories used felspar porcelain.

Bone china is characterized by the addition of animal knucklebone ashes to the clay mass, something which gives the material particular qualities. Compared with felspar

5. *Også hun falt for “Høstløv”*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1957—Figgjo archive) (“Også hun falt for “Høstløv” .. serviset i tidens smak”)

6. *Et lite... og så den store overraskelsen*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1957—Figgjo archive) (“Når De vil vise Deres frue hvor stor pris De setter på hennes arbeid i hjemmet, hva er da naturligere enn å gi henne noe av *virkelig* stor verdi. *Et festlig servis er tingen...* HØSTLØV, et stilig, elegant og samtidig høyst moderne servis... Hun vil bli henrykt!”)

7. *Sissel—en festlig ramme*, advertisement (Undated, ca. 1955-56—Figgjo archive) (“enkelt, moderne og praktisk.”)

8. Ulf-E. Rosenberg (ed.), *Figgjo—Formet av entusiasme gjennom 60 år, 1941-2001* (Figgjo: Figgjo AS, 2001) p 40

9. It has not been possible to date these experiments precisely, but somewhere between 1955 and 1959 seems plausible: One of the bone china prototype vases is shown on a photo in Ragnar Grimrud, “Produsenten har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 186. According to Arne Harris Johannessen, who joined Figgjo as laboratory manager in 1959, the experiments were concluded before his arrival: Ivar Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland kunstnersenter, 1991) p 37, endnote 11

10. Liv Schjødt, *God form er best i bruk* (Oslo: NKL forlaget, 1956) p 15



Figure 14–3: Prototypes (bone china) Figgjo, ca 1955-59. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. (Photos from I. Stranger, *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991))

porcelain, bone china requires somewhat lower baking temperature—ca 1350 degrees centigrade. Although this temperature is still about 150 degrees higher than earthenware baking, it might have been one reason why Figgjo chose to experiment with bone china

rather than with felspar porcelain. Otherwise, the two varieties of porcelain have very similar material properties, such as the much sought after translucency.¹¹

The bone china prototypes made at Figgjo were left undecorated, except for some details in black glaze such as a saucer and a lid knob.¹² Another characteristic of the preserved items is the fluid, organic forms. Both these traits indicate that the bone china experiments were much about exploring design possibilities, aesthetic effects, formal expressions and treatment of material. In terms of typology and morphology, the coffee pot [Figure 14-3, top right] spawns some interesting associations. It bears a remarkable resemblance to the one belonging to the German manufacturer Rosenthal's *Form 2000* coffee set designed by the American designer Richard Latham of Raymond Loewy Associates in 1954.¹³ Although Ragnar Grimsrud himself never made any public statements regarding the immoral and lamentable attitude towards design which Loewy and his streamlining colleagues were accused of promoting, we have seen that plenty of his fellow partisans in the Norwegian design community did—and vehemently so.¹⁴ The resemblance between Grimsrud's and Loewy's (or rather: Latham's) coffee pots is therefore quite intriguing, whether it is deliberate or incidental.¹⁵

Another version of a bone china coffee pot prototype points in other directions. First, it seems to have influenced the design of the 1958 *Benta* service coffee pot, something which only underscores the function of the bone china experiments as formal exploration and contribution to the company's internal development of their design processes. More surprising, however, is the apparent familiarity between these two Figgjo coffee pots and one from the 1959 Porsgrund service *Jubileum*, designed by Eystein Sandnes [Figure 14-4].¹⁶ These are just fascinating observations. There is no need to start making any insinuations or allegations regarding “appropriate ownership” to these design features.

Albeit for different reasons, both the *Høstløv* service and the bone china prototypes are examples of design conducted in the spirit of investigating modern formal expressions and aesthetics at the expense of manufacturability concerns. They definitely

11. Tias Eckhoff, “Keramiske materialer i husholdningen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 183-184

12. It might be mentioned that the same principle of contrasting glaze was taken up by Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik a few years later in a service introduced in 1960 called *Contrast* designed by Eystein Sandnes. It had an entirely white cup (just like the Figgjo prototype) sitting on a dark glazed saucer (Porsgrund used dark brown, while the Figgjo prototype was black): Alf Bøe, *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år* (Porsgrund/Oslo: Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik/Tanum, 1967) p 225 & 235

13. Peter Dormer, *Design Since 1945* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993) p 175 and Bernd Fritz, “New impulses at Rosenthal: Loewy's designs for chinaware” in Angela Schönberger (ed.), *Raymond Loewy: Pioneer of American Industrial Design* (Munich: Prestel, 1990) p 134-141

14. One of the most severe examples is: Thorbjørn Rygh, ““Amerikansk Form”” in Thorvald Krohn-Hansen (ed.), *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1953* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1954)

15. Just the fact that Raymond Loewy Associates was commissioned by a reputed German firm such as Rosenthal—who since Philip Rosenthal's accession as director in 1945 had employed several *gute form* advocating designers and Werkbund members such as Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Margret Hildebrand—is quite puzzling given the fact that Loewy from the early 1950s was made the primary target for the West German design community—especially the Werkbund's relentless attack on the “unethical and irresponsible” nature of American streamline design. And certainly, Werkbund complained, but Rosenthal dismissed the Werkbund critique and displayed a design strategy very similar to that of Figgjo at the time—Rosenthal saw variety and decoration as essential in pleasing public taste and thus making sales: Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) p 87 & 102



Figure 14–4: Left: Prototype coffee pot (bone china) Figgjo, ca 1955-59. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Middle: *Finse Benta* coffee pot (earthenware) Figgjo, 1958. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Right: *Jubileum Risotto* coffee pot and cup (felspar porcelain) Porsgrund, 1959. Designer: Eystein Sandnes. (Photos from Figgjo archive (left and middle) and A. Bøe, *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år, 1885-1965* (Porsgrund & Oslo: PP & J. Grundt Tanums forlag, 1967))

did not pay the salaries at Figgjo, nor were they necessarily intended to. After years of mostly dealing with pragmatic bread and butter design, Grimsrud and his staff seem to have let their hair down for a while and allowed themselves a treat or two with these projects. Alternation between experimental work and more goal-oriented design for rational mass-production was a widespread ideal in the design community as a way of promoting creativity in the designers and of improving the design quality of mass-produced objects.¹⁷ At Figgjo, this attitude and practice reached its peak with the work conducted by their first commissioned freelance designer.

16. *Jubileum* was awarded a Silver Medal at the XII Triennale di Milano in 1960: Randi Gaustad, “Porsgrunds Porselen på utstilling” in Lauritz Opstad, *et al.* (eds.), *Porsgrund Porselen 100 år* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo and Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1985) p 25. Gaustad describes *Jubileum* as “well designed” due to e.g. its “sliding shifts between spout and pot” (“velformet... glidende overganger mellom tut og kanne”). Alf Bøe, on the other hand, thought that the *Jubileum* coffee pot was characterized by a “dryness in the design”—whatever that means. Bøe, *op.cit.* p 235-238 (“tørighet i formgivningen”)

17. Eystein Sandnes, design manager at Porsgrund from 1957, could serve as a representative of this ideal when he in an interview stated that “Alteration between everyday goods and elite production is extremely rewarding”: Leena Mannila, “Det er vårt bord” in Opstad, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 35 (“Vekselbruk mellom hverdagsvarer og eliteproduksjon er uhyre givende”). Even a radical and industrially oriented designer like Bjørn Engø, a co-founder of ID-gruppen, acknowledged the benefits of this alternation: Bjørn Engø interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Bjørn Engø tegner tekstil, aluminium, kobber og lager emaljearbeider” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 42. In the first “official” history of Norwegian industrial design, Figgjo is identified as one of the primary examples of this ideal of alternation in the 1950s: Alf Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963) p 43

14.3 Hermann Bongard at Figgjo: Creativity on commission

When freelance designer Hermann Bongard was hired by Figgjo effective from September 1. 1956, he was already established as one of the most highly regarded practitioners in the Norwegian design community. As early as in 1950, at the age of 29, he was described as one of the greatest up-and-coming designers.¹⁸ An important event in the construction of his fame was of course also his participation in the “gold rush” at the X Triennale di Milano, making Norway the “revelation” of the 1954 Milanese event.¹⁹ Also in retrospect, Bongard has been hailed as one of the greatest Norwegian designers of the time.²⁰

Hermann Bongard was born in 1921, and studied graphic design at the National College of Arts and Crafts (Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) in Oslo from 1938 to 1941. His teachers included the painter Per Krogh and the sculptor and glass designer Sverre Pettersen. Following graduation, Bongard tried to set up his own practice as a commercial artist in Oslo. This venture must have been strenuous, to say the least, during the WWII German occupation—the scarcity of merchandise did not exactly propel the demand for advertisements. Ironically enough, his first published work was some “anti-commercials” which *Bonytt* produced during the war on behalf of companies who wanted to remind the readers of their existence despite their lacking any products to sell.²¹

After the confinement of five long war years, Bongard left for Paris in search of inspiration, experience and adventure. When he returned to Oslo in 1947, he needed a steady job. Hence, he paid a visit to his old teacher Sverre Pettersen, who also happened to be going on twenty years as a partner in the design office of Christiania Glasmagasin (CG), a department store who also owned Hadeland glass works.²² Already during Bongard’s student years, Pettersen had offered him employment at the CG design office—an offer which Bongard now took him up on. After a month or so at the

18. Jens von der Lippe, “Nye navn i kunstindustrien” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 212-216

19. Hadeland’s glass series *Hermann* and decanter *Decanter*, both designed by Bongard, was awarded gold and silver medals at the X Triennale di Milano in 1954: Leena Mannila (ed.), *God form i Norge—Jacob-prisens vinnere 1957-1995* (Oslo: Norsk Form / Messel, 1996) p 119-120. Giò Ponti, editor of the renowned architectural magazine *Domus*, described Norway’s contribution to the X Triennale as “this year’s revelation”: Giò Ponti, “Saluto alla Decima Triennale Augurio alla Undicesima” in *Domus* No. 302, 1955, p 2 (“la rivelazione di quest’anno”)

20. One example of this is that the chapter devoted to “Scandinavian Design” in the design historian Fredrik Wildhagen’s book *Norge i Form* opens with an extremely panegyric ode to a salad set designed by Bongard: Fredrik Wildhagen, *Norge i Form—Kunsthåndverk og design under industrikulturen* (Oslo: J.M. Stenersen, 1988) p 143. Another is that he was awarded the *Jacob Prize* in 1982: Mannila (ed.), *op.cit.* p 118. An indication of Bongard’s international acknowledgment—at least in elite design circles—is that his work is represented in the Smithsonian Institution of Washington DC: Erik Zählle (ed.), *Hjemmets brugskunst—Kunsthåndværk og Kunstindustri i Norden* (København: Hassings, 1961) p 268

21. Håkon Stenstadvold, “Hermann Bongard—Tegneren” in Lauritz Opstad (ed.), *Tegneren Hermann Bongard* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1971) p 7. For various examples of the “anti-commercials”, see e.g. *Bonytt* Vol. 3, 1943

22. Inger Helene N. Stemshaug, “Sverre Pettersen—En modernismens industridesigner” in Widar Halén (ed.), *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996) p 27-33. For more on this industry structure and its history, see: Rolv Petter Amdam, Tore Jørgen Hanisch and Ingvild Elisabeth Pharo, *Vel blåst!—Christiania Glasmagasin og norsk glassindustri 1739-1989* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1989)

Hadeland glass works where he was to learn about the production, he started his career at the CG design office.²³

Here he would remain until 1955, and did many different kinds of design work there: In the early years he designed engravery decorations, mostly one-off products and special commissions for windows, vases, cups, dishes, etc. Being a graphic designer by training, this was probably a natural introduction to working with glass. Still, his first industrial design project was completed as early as 1948—a series of mass-produced, affordable, stackable liqueur glasses, followed two years later by a series of stackable tumblers called *Tullik*. Other examples of Bongard's design for serial production at Hadeland include a decanter from 1953, a series of wine glasses named *Hermann* from 1952 (awarded gold and silver medals at X Triennale di Milano, 1954),²⁴ the *Arizona* tumblers from 1954 and the *Guri* range from 1954—which was developed parallel to his colleague Willy Johansson's *Siri* range which had a similar formal expression but was made in pressed glass and thus became much cheaper and far more popular [Figure 14-5].²⁵

In addition to this devotion to industrial design, Bongard also became a significant contributor to Hadeland's special programme launched in 1952: *K-glass*—the art glass series. These were handicraft products made as unique pieces or in limited series which gave the designers virtually unlimited artistic freedom and became an important profiling tool for the company [Figure 14-6].²⁶

When asked to present (or rather; promote) Norwegian glass production in a 1957 special issue of *Bonytt* dedicated to an export campaign, Hermann Bongard spoke warmly of this elite production of art glass and hand-blown crystal, while he de-emphasized the more affordable, mundane serial production to which he himself also contributed.²⁷ But despite his open appeal for a more artistic practice in Norwegian glass design, his varied practice suggests that Bongard very much favoured the above mentioned idea of shifting between experimental handicraft and industrial design.

Five years after his return from Paris and in the middle of his CG/Hadeland period, Bongard embarked on another classical “educative journey” (“dannelsesreise”). He spent the summer of 1952 travelling about Italy, engaging in all the mandatory cultural activities. At this point, his first-hand experience with the world of modern industry and its products was rather limited, and he was not particularly pleased with its effects on the “land of classical culture”. After having praised the nature, the culture, the cuisine, the enology, etc., he reported from his romantic idyll at Classe, just outside Ravenna:

A moment ago, nothing happened here, but now, the boy behind the counter tears along round and around on this place in a swirl of dust from the motorcycle. The tranquillity of the siesta is transformed into an inferno of noise, and the dust obscures the sun. Southward over the campagna it unwinds, the road that Dante and Byron have poetized, so could not that rascal rather raise hell over that! Or stay put in the dark behind the curtain with the

23. Jonas Hidle, “Bongard og glasset” in Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.* p 15

24. Mannila (ed.), *op.cit.* p 119-120

25. Bøe, *op.cit.* p 268-272

26. Wildhagen, *op.cit.* p 129

27. Hermann Bongard, “Norwegian Glass” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 94-97

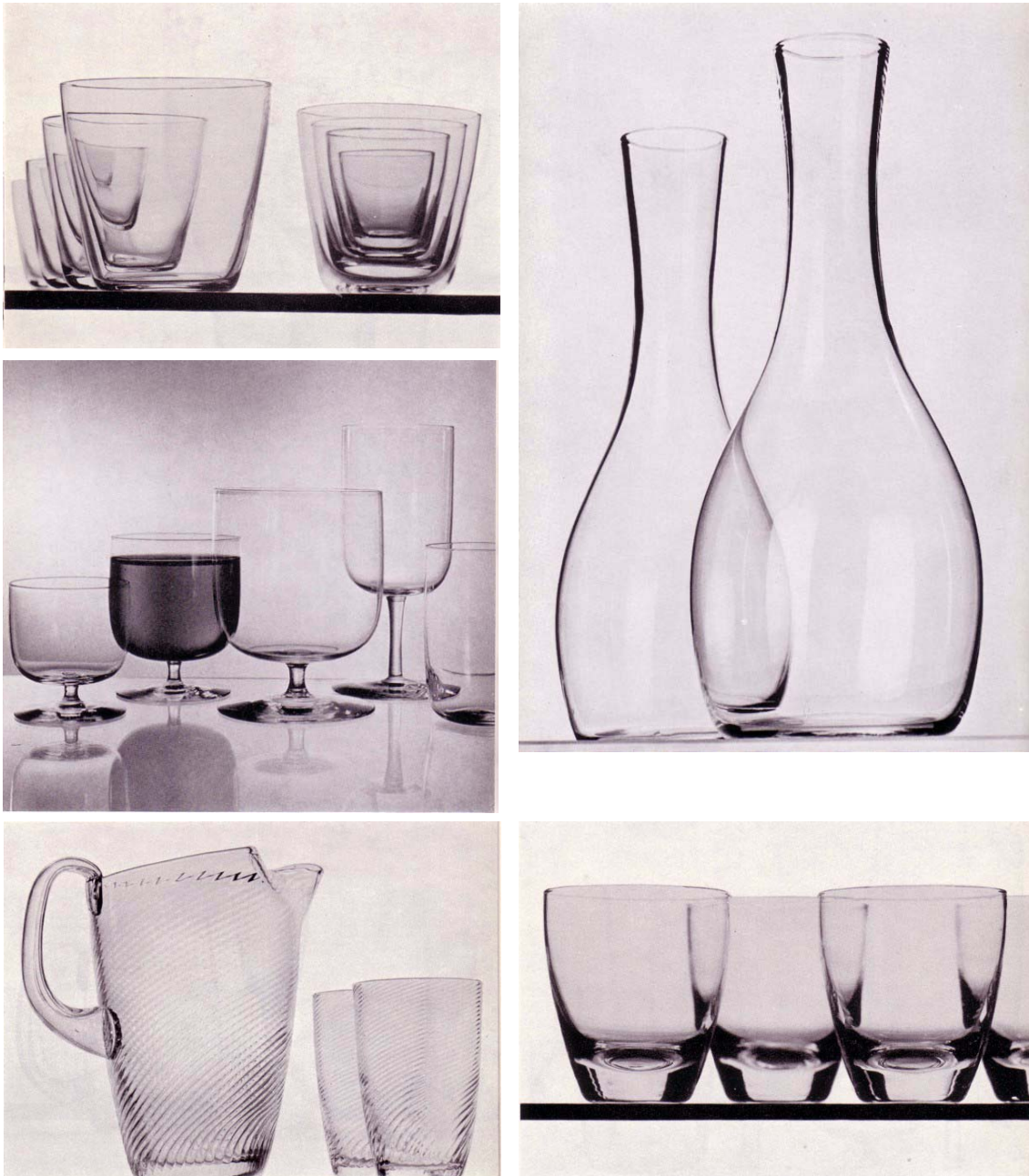


Figure 14–5: Examples of Hermann Bongard’s design for serial production at Hadeland. Top left: *Tullik* (1950) Top right: *Decanter* (1953) Middle left: *Hermann* (1952) Bottom left: *Guri* (1954) Bottom right: *Arizona*. (Photos from L. Opstad (ed.), *Tegneren Hermann Bongard* (Oslo: Kunstin-
dustrimuseet i Oslo, 1971) and A. Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstin-
dustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963))

salt, the tobacco and the wine so red and so white! Anyhow, torture and anguish should await the manufacturer of these tiny motorcycles, numerous as the winged crowds of the sky above them. Vespa in Italian and Vepsen [the Wasp] in Norwegian is their befitting name. Have minimal fuel consumption and exert maximum wear on the nerves of righteous pedestrians. But suddenly the demonstration in the guest’s honour is over and the sun comes out again strong. Quickly I divide Italy in the Vespa—and the Vatican-state.

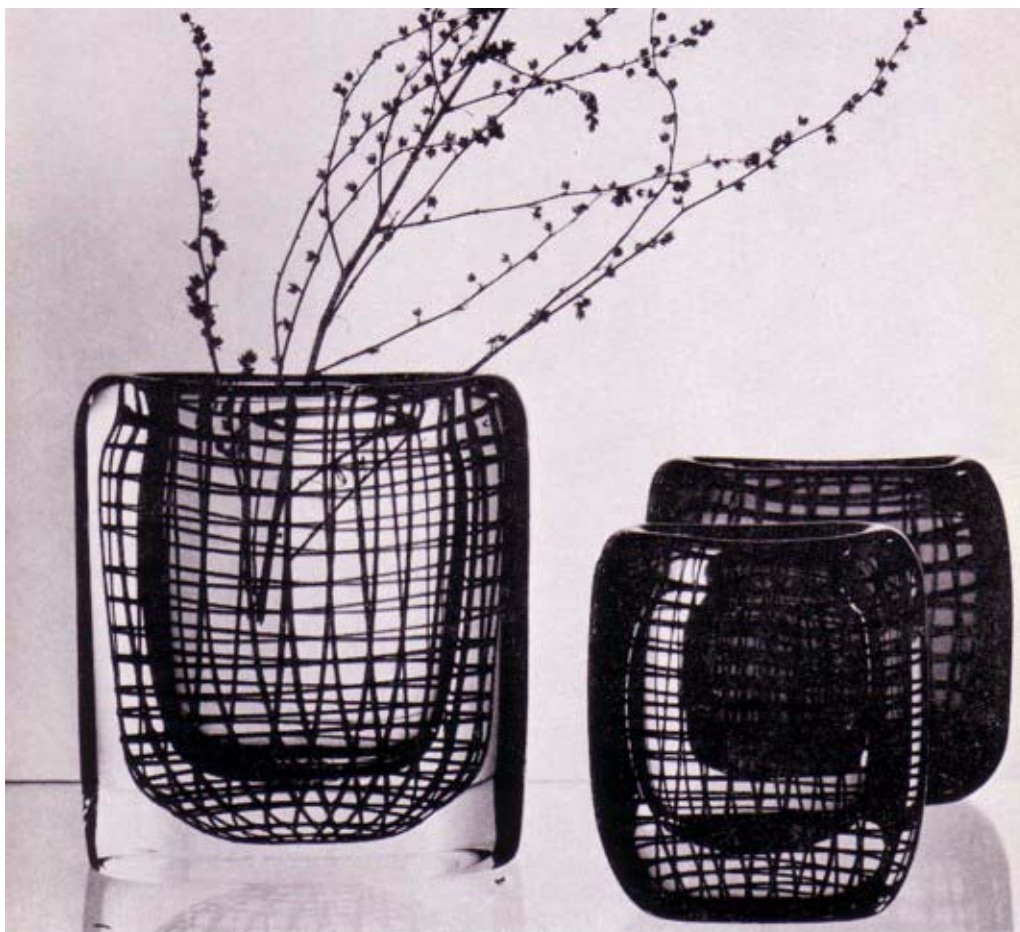


Figure 14–6: An example of Hermann Bongard’s design for the art glass series *K-glass* at Hadeland: Flattened vases of layered crystal on a black network (1953). (Photo from Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.*)

Noise and tranquillity.²⁸

Despite being a young man, only 31 at the time, Bongard did not manage to see the Vespa scooter as it was widely considered by his contemporary Italians—as the epitome of progress, freedom, modern life, industrial invention and the *linea italiana* of modern design.²⁹ To him, it was just a foreign element from the dark side of modern industrialized society intruding the perfection of his romantic illusion of classical Italy. He chose to disregard his close encounter with this twentieth century icon, found inspiration in the local wine instead and went home to design his decanter [Figure 14-5].

28. Hermann Bongard, “Italiensk salat” in *Bonytt* Vol. 12, 1952, p 207 (“Her skjedde ingenting for et øyeblikk siden, men nu farer gutten bak disken rundt og rundt på dette sted i en hvirvel av støv fra motorsykkelen. Forvandlet er siestaens ro til et inferno av larm, og støvet formørker solen. Sydover campagnaen strekker veien seg som Dante og Byron har høyt besunget, så måtte ikke den laban heller larme over den! Eller holde seg i mørket bak forhenget hos saltet, tobakken og vinen så rød og så hvit! Uansett burde hjul og steile vente produsenten av disse bittesmå motorsyklene, tallrike som himmelens vingede skarer over dem. Vespa på italiensk og Vepsen på norsk er deres treffende navn. Har minimalt forbruk av bensin og øver maksimal slitasje på nervene hos de rettferdige fotgjengere. Men plutselig er demonstrasjonen til gjestens ære slutt og solen kommer sterkt igjen. Hastig deler jeg Italia i Vespa—og Vatican-staten. Larm og ro.”)

In 1955, Bongard left his position at the CG design office and set up shop as a consultant designer. Figgjo was, however, not his first encounter with the industry in Rogaland. Already in 1950, he had won an open design competition organized by Stavangerflint—but the project never materialized. His victory in another open design competition, organized by the Sandnes based company Polaris for utensils in stainless steel, on the other hand, led to his first design commission in 1956.³⁰ The Polaris projects required a very different take on the design process due to a production scale and manufacturing methods much differing, from those at Hadeland, something which is reflected in the products [Figure 14-7]. A commission from the silversmith company

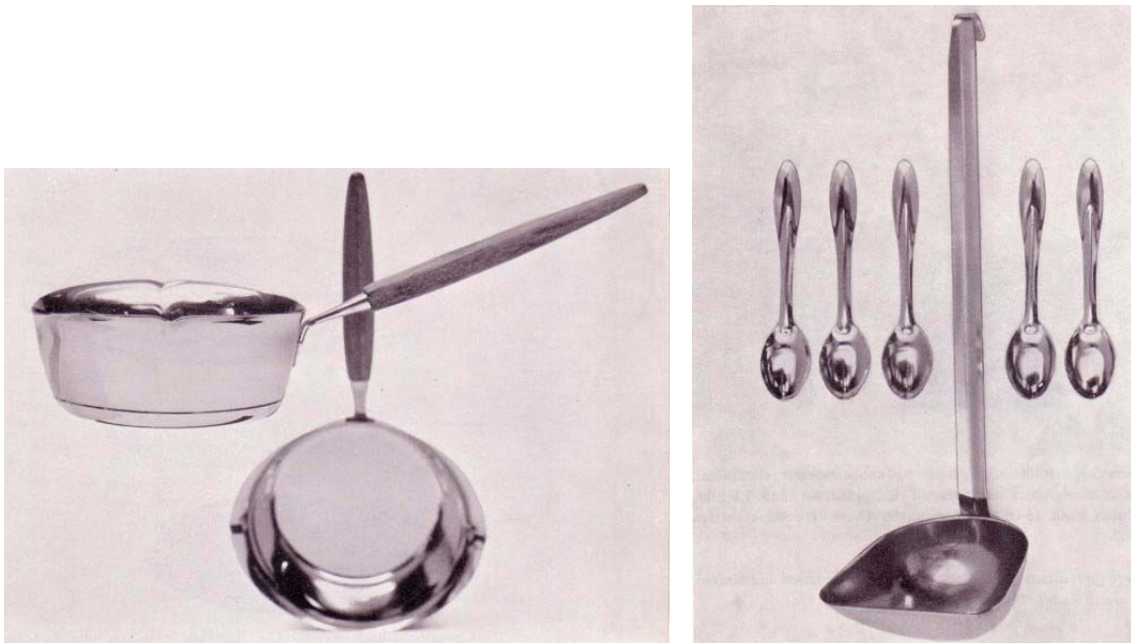


Figure 14-7: Left: Butter melter 0811 (stainless steel) Polaris, 1958. Designer: Hermann Bongard. Right: ladle 0459 and teaspoons 2211 (stainless steel) Polaris, 1958. Designer: Hermann Bongard. Note the ladle's unconventional flat front designed for better scooping performance in flat-bottomed pots. These products, and many other designs by Bongard—including some for Figgjo, but excluding art glass for Hadeland—were shown as the first large-scale exhibition of industrial design in the Museum of Decorative Art in Oslo (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) in 1963. (Photos from Bøe, *op.cit.*)

Oslo Sølvvareverksted in 1958 meant experience with yet another material and other production methods.³¹ The resulting product, a cutlery named *Taffel* proved, according

29. For a cultural history of the Vespa, see: Thomas Brandt, *Frie hjerter og små motorer. Kulturell produksjon, formidling og bruk av den italienske Vespa-scooteren, 1946-1969* [Doctoral dissertation] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2006). For a discussion of the cultural-iconic function of the two most popular Italian scooters, the Piaggio *Vespa* and the Innocenti *Lambretta*, see: Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light—On Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988) p 77-115. For more on the Vespa, see e.g.: Davide Mazzanti (ed.), *Vespa—Un'avventura Italiana nel mondo* (Firenze: Giunti, 2003)

30. Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.* p 108-109 and Harriet Clayhills, *33 brukskunstnere / 33 Norwegian designers* (Oslo: Bonytt Forlag, 1959) p 8

31. Zahle (ed.), *op.cit.*

to a curious remark by *Bonytt* journalist Harriet Clayhills, that “Hermann Bongard has not exaggerated the modern into modernism”.³²

As we can see, Bongard was in many ways a typical “applied artist” (“brukskunstner”) in the traditional sense, designing products covering the entire spectre from industrially mass-produced goods to exclusive handicraft. And it was precisely this versatility that made him such a textbook example for the applied art community, committed as they were to the idea of the general practitioner operating in different fields with different approaches, different manufacturing systems and volumes, and different materials. This admiration of Bongard only magnified as the applied art community’s universalistic superstructure started to disintegrate throughout the 1960s and 1970s.³³ Consequently, Bongard found himself just as home in Norwegian Applied Artists’ Union (Norsk Brukskunstnerlag) as he did in the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)). His work for Figgjo would reflect both these sides of his attitude towards design.

The contract between Figgjo Fajanse A/S and Hermann Bongard, signed September 1. 1956, describes the type of work to be performed, its prerequisites and conditions:

[Bongard’s] functions are limited to designing patterns and decors for reproduction on earthenware, and potential appurtenant design of the artefacts with such decor/pattern. It is prerequisite that the silk screen printing technique at the time of the contract signing is fully explored by the company, just as the ceramic experience the company holds are loyally placed at Bongard’s disposal. The primary purpose is to create and develop a new article for the company’s production. In addition to this, it is desirable to utilize the silk screen printing technique on services where it is both practically and aesthetically compatible.³⁴

Furthermore, the contract states that “The company has the right and obligation to by signature announce that Bongard is the author of the produced patterns and decors, plus any forms.”³⁵ Such a wording indicates a significant contrast between the self-perception of the freelance designer and the in-house designer, as well as a distinctly different attitude from the company towards the external designer. It suggests that Bongard saw himself as an “author”, or “artist” who deserved recognition and ownership to the “work” just as conventional artists. This does not necessarily mean, however, that he regarded

32. Harriet Clayhills, “Et skritt fremover” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 111 (“Hermann Bongard har ikke overdrevet det moderne til modernisme”)

33. Jens von der Lippe, “Den allsidige Bongard” in Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.* p 39-61

34. Contract between Figgjo Fajanse A.S. and Hermann Bongard (September 1. 1956—Figgjo archive) (“[Bongards] arbeidsområde begrenses til tegning av mønster og dekor for reproduksjon på fajanse, og eventuell tilhørende formgivning av gjenstandene med slik dekor/mønster. Det er en forutsetning at silketrykkmetoden ved kontraktens inngåelse er fullt uteksperimentert av bedriften, likesom de keramiske erfaringer bedriften rår over loyalt stilles til Bongards disposisjon. Den primære hensikt [sic] er å skape og utvikle en for bedriften ny artikkel i dens produksjon. Ved siden av dette er det ønskelig å benytte silketrykkmetoden til tjenester hvor det både praktisk og estetisk er forenlig.”)

35. Contract between Figgjo Fajanse A.S. and Hermann Bongard (September 1. 1956—Figgjo archive) (“Bedriften har rett og plikt til ved signering å tilkjenne at Bongard er opphavsmann til de produserte mønstre og dekorere [sic], eventuelt [sic] også former.”)

design as art—it might just as well have been part of his marketing strategy now that he worked freelance and depended on his reputation for new assignments.

More interesting is the clause seen from Figgjo's side. In line with their policy of making everyday products for the broad public, Figgjo had never used the designers' names as marketing tools, despite the fact that Grimsrud's name was reputable enough for it to have potential as such. With Bongard on the team, they considered new options. It is not fair to say that Figgjo exploited the promotional potential in Bongard's affiliation to the fullest, but it certainly helped the company to some extent in terms of increased goodwill with the design elite and made Figgjo's name appear in some new and exclusive contexts.³⁶

The contract shows that Figgjo primarily commissioned Bongard the graphic designer, not Bongard the product designer. This was because Ragnar Grimsrud and decor design manager Rolf Frøyland were lacking the capacity to develop new decors based on the new in-house silk-screen printing office which Figgjo opened in 1956. Grimsrud wrote to Bongard that

Our primary vacuum is decor. It is hard to tell about the future, but I would guess that we in the immediate future concentrate on “gift articles”. You will of course be free to design both form and decor, in that these things cannot always be separated. But it will also be required that you design decors for forms designed by myself or by Løve Nilsen.³⁷

Thus, the contract also opened for product design by Bongard, and from the start he developed both decors and models—separate as well as appurtenant ones. Among the first decors he designed were a series of circus motifs intended for a children's service and a range of old ship motifs for decorative platters.³⁸ A less profane decor project consisted of some cylindrical vases in white semi-matt and lustrous glaze decorated with line drawings poising between patterns or pictures in a style highly characteristic of Bongard. Reviewing an exhibition of Bongard's designs in 1957, *Bonytt's* Håkon Stenstadvold described these vases as “rolled-up graphic prints”—as fine art rather than applied art.³⁹ But these artefacts were limited edition products made for promotional purposes rather than for mass-production [Figure 14-8].

Among the earliest product models designed by Bongard for Figgjo are some artefacts detached from the ordinary production services, and their production volumes were thus probably quite limited [Figure 14-9]. Still, many of the design features expressed in these objects were later further developed in products with wider

36. One example may be that Figgjo appeared in a rather “heroic” 1975 American publication on Scandinavian design. But the only Figgjo designer mentioned is Bongard, and I find it implausible that Figgjo would have been mentioned at all had it not been for its association with Bongard's “celebrity” status: Eileene Harrison Beer, *Scandinavian Design: Objects of a Life Style* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975) p 29

37. Letter from Grimsrud to Bongard (04.07.1956—Figgjo archive) (“Vårt primære behov er dekor. Det er vanskelig å dømme om fremtiden, men jeg skulle anta at vi i nærmeste tid konsentrerer oss om “gaveartikler”. Det vil da selvsagt stå deg fritt for å tegne både form og dekor, så meget mer som at disse ting ikke alltid kan skilles. Men det vil også være nødvendig at du tegner dekor for former laget av meg eller av Løve Nilsen.”)

38. Letter from Bongard to Ragnar Grimsrud (11.04.1957—Figgjo archive) and Letter from Bongard to Harald Lima (23.04.1957—Figgjo archive)

39. Håkon Stenstadvold, “Lunningsprisen [sic] 1958 [sic] til Hermann Bongard” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 49-52 (“et grafisk blad som er rullet sammen.”)

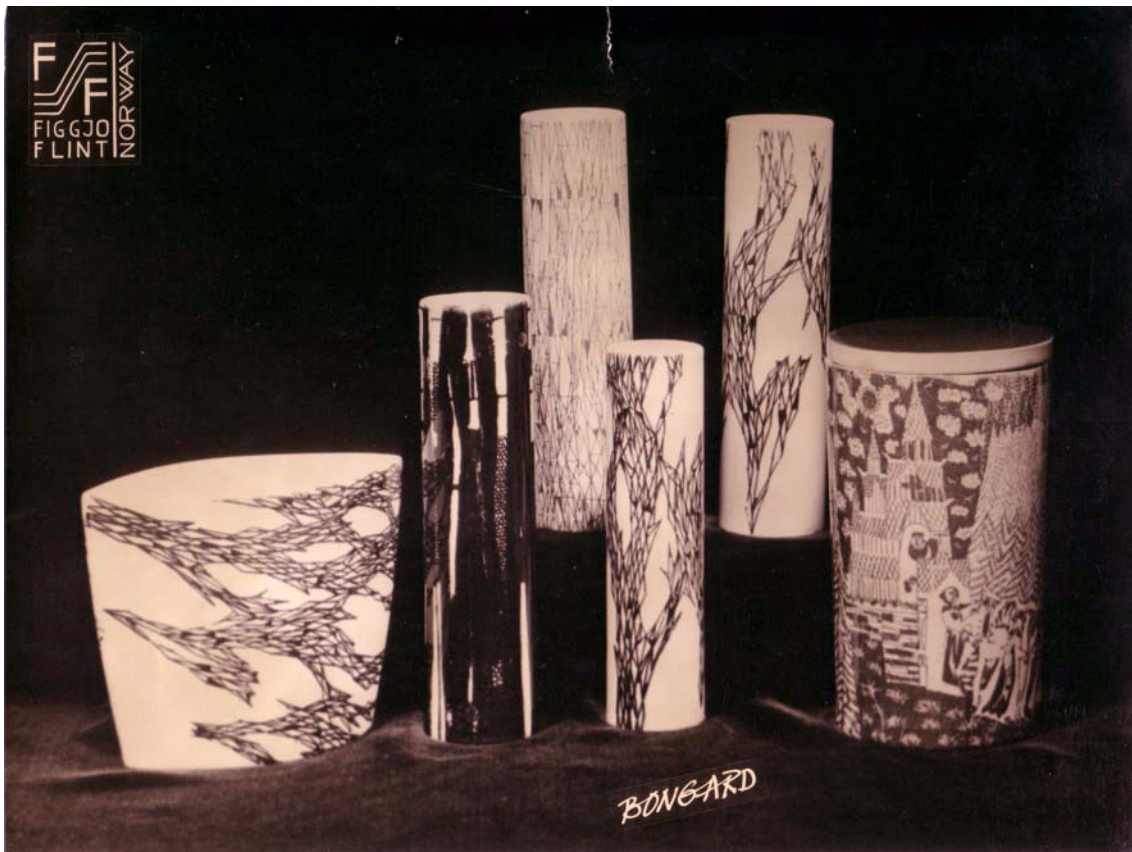


Figure 14–8: Vases (earthenware) Figgjo, 1957. Designer: Hermann Bongard. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

distribution. Furthermore, the ceramist, writer and teacher Jens von der Lippe described this sauce boat and the mocha pot as “examples of the clean elegance typical of [Bongard].”⁴⁰

As we have seen, Hermann Bongard was a highly esteemed designer already before the collaboration with Figgjo began. However, perhaps the greatest single symbol of his fame and professional acknowledgment was to come towards the end of 1957 when he was awarded the Lunning Prize as the third Norwegian since its establishment in 1951.⁴¹ Bongard was celebrated with an exhibition in Per Tannum’s newly established shop Norway Designs in December 1957 and a following presentation of his career and production in *Bonytt*.⁴² Bongard himself was happy and honoured, but also felt quite

40. von der Lippe, *op.cit.* p 55 (“eksempler på den renslige eleganse som er typisk for [Bongard].”)

41. Helena Dahlbäck Lutteman and Marianne Ugglå (eds.), *The Lunning Prize* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1986) p 86-89. Bongard had been chosen as the Norwegian sub-committee’s first candidate already at the first edition of the Lunning Prize in 1951. The statutes of the award stated that the candidates should be young practitioners, and the fact that the prize consisted of a travel grant supports the age-aspect. But the Lunning committee chose to de-emphasize this, and turned the award into a symbol of acknowledgment for mid-career practitioners. Thus, Bongard—being only 30 years in 1951—was not yet merited enough, and was downgraded by the Norwegian sub-committee (T. Prytz and F. Aars) until he was considered “ripe” again in 1957: Astrid Skjerven, *Goodwill for Scandinavian Design—Lunningprisen 1951-70* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2001) p 177

42. Håkon Stenstadvold, “Lunningsprisen [sic] 1958 [sic] til Hermann Bongard” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 49-52



Figure 14–9: Some early products designs by Hermann Bongard for Figgjo: Top left: sauce boat (1956). Bottom left: bowls (1958). Right: Mocha pots and cup (1958). (Photos from Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.* and Bøe, *op.cit.*)

astonished and exhausted by all the commotion generated by the award. The prize was to be formally presented to him by Ferdinand Aars—member of the Lunning Prize committee and Secretary General of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst)—in the showroom on December 21. “with the press and all kinds of fuss.”⁴³

Being rushed into the hurried planning of the exhibition, he wrote to Grimsrud that “I want to, at all events, above all include some earthenware.”⁴⁴ The only problem was that the collaboration with Figgjo was at this point so recent that there was not much to choose from. Bongard asked Grimsrud specifically for the cylindrical vases [Figure 14-8], which were more or less finished, but at the same time he begged Grimsrud’s pardon for being so impetuous and impatient.⁴⁵ The design of mass-produced articles required more

43. Letter from Bongard to Ragnar Grimsrud (08.11.1957—Figgjo archive) (“med presse og all slags oppstyr.”)

44. *Ibid.* (“Jeg vil, når det først skal være, fremforalt ha med noe fajanse.”)

45. *Ibid.* Bongard wrote that this whole ordeal was “somewhat of a ‘Sputnik’ surprise”—a striking and depicting characteristic of something surprising in 1957, I assume. (“litt av en ‘Sputnik’ overraskelse”).

time, so it would be these vases and similar objects which represented Figgjo at the exhibition. As promotion vehicles, they seem to have functioned well. After the exhibition opening, Bongard wrote to Grimsrud: “Hereby the happy message that everyone is very fond of “the earthenware”! When I say everyone, I mean each and all.”⁴⁶ He also passed on congratulations to Figgjo from Ferdinand Aars. They were also given a prominent place in Håkon Stenstadvold’s presentation of Bongard in *Bonytt*:

In a series of stoneware products for Figgjo Fajanse we find Hermann Bongard’s sense of decor and the decorated surface. There are some cylindric vases in white semi-matt and lustrous glaze. Printed on them are line drawings which are either patterns or pictures. And then, the white cylinder constantly form a part of a drawing and gives us a little curious feeling, as if it were a graphic print rolled up and which we would like to see in its entirety.⁴⁷

It is not only the rather grave blunder of mistaking the product’s material—which is earthenware, not stoneware—that indicates that Stenstadvold here ventured into the periphery of his own domain. The way he describes the vases as rolled-up graphic prints—as fine art rather than applied art (not to mention design)—reveals with all possible clarity his identity as a painter, and explains why the article is so biased towards the purely aesthetic aspects of Bongard’s production. Regarding these specific vases, however, Stenstadvold’s reflections might not be so far-fetched after all. They were not mass-produced utilities, and are better understood as experiments in form, colour and technique. Bongard’s contribution to Figgjo’s commercially viable mass-produced products would not emerge until a couple of years later.

Hermann Bongard’s most significant contribution to Figgjo’s production—at least when measured by production volume, variations and longevity—came with the range of oven-to-table products in oven-proof cordierite-based earthenware, series number 12000, known as *Vulcanus* [Figure 14-10]. Oven-to-table products were the latest craze in the mid-fifties, propelled by arguments like reduced number of items for the housewife to wash as the food could be prepared and served in the same vessel.⁴⁸ This argument turned out to be somewhat dubious, though. Vessels intended for the oven functioned well. Vessels intended for the hot-plate—such as frying pans, casseroles, etc.—turned out to have a tendency to scorch food and to crack as a result of too rapid

46. Letter from Bongard to Ragnar Grimsrud (02.12.1957—Figgjo archive) (“Herved det glade budskap at alle synes meget godt om “fajansen”! Når jeg sier alle så mener jeg samtilige.”)

47. Håkon Stenstadvold, “Lunningsprisen [sic] 1958 [sic] til Hermann Bongard” in *Bonytt* Vol. 18, 1958, p 49-52 (“I en rekke stengodsvarer for Figgjo Fajanse finner vi igjen denne Hermann Bongards sans for dekoren og den dekorerte flaten. Der er noen sylindriske vaser i hvit halvmatt og blank glasur. På dem er trykt strektegninger, som enten er mønstre eller bilder. Og da danner den hvite sylindren stadig en del av en tegning og gir oss en liten nysgjerrig følelse, liksom av et grafisk blad som er rullet sammen, og som vi gjerne ville se det hele av.”)

48. The British design historian Jonathan Woodham has pointed to the development of oven-to-table products in the 1950s and 1960s as an “example which illustrates a... correspondence between social patters and ceramic production” because it “was bound up in the more practical and relaxed attitudes of the period to food preparation and presentation, as well as the changes in house-planning which led to the move towards kitchen-dining and dining-livingrooms.” The example is intended to substantiate his argument for closer ties between design history and social history: Jonathan Woodham, “Ceramic History” in Hazel Conway (ed.), *Design History—a student’s handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987) p 45



Figure 14–10: Parts from the oven-to-table range model number 12000, *Vulcanus* (cordierite-based earthenware) Figgjo, ca. 1959. Designer: Hermann Bongard. Decor: *Leif Viking* (Brown with yellow lids). (Facsimile from catalogue in Figgjo archive)

temperature variations.⁴⁹ These products could thus be seen as fundamentally dysfunctional and hence as being in breach of a central modernist idiom. That ceramic manufacturers began to produce frying pans is then probably better seen as an attempt to expand their product range rather than as an attempt to create the best possible product-solution to a given utilitarian function.

Vulcanus came late, but good: Porsgrund had launched their oven-to-table range *Glohane* designed by Tias Eckhoff in 1955,⁵⁰ and Stavangerflint their version known as *Flamingo* designed by Eystein Sandnes in 1956.⁵¹ Porsgrund and Stavangerflint went with one-coloured glazings for their oven-to-table ranges, presenting strong, deep

49. See e.g.: Sonja Schartum, “De unge setter bo” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 24-28

50. Alf Bøe, *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år* (Porsgrund/Oslo: Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik/Tanum, 1967) p 231. *Glohane* was developed in collaboration with the National Information Bureau for Domestic Science (Statens opplysningskontor for husstell) and was not manufactured at Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik, but at their associated company Sanitærporselen A/S where the oven-proof products were baked in-between the toilets and sinks, thus exploiting unused baking capacity: Ole Rikard Høisæther, *Design på norsk—Fra Nøstetangen til Norway Says* (Oslo: Damm, 2005) p 185. As it turned out, *Glohane* was not really oven-proof after all: a leading French porcelain manufacturer tested the product and concluded that it did not meet the requirements for a over-proof material. Porsgrund was confronted with these results, but did nothing to change neither the material nor the marketing of the product: Information supplied by sales manager at Porsgrund at the time, Viggo B. Heirung in conversation with the author, 14.10.2005.

51. Jens von der Lippe, “Bord dekk deg!” in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1956, p 231-233

colours like yellow, sea blue, emerald green and black.⁵² The *Leif Viking* decor in plain brown glaze with yellow lids was Figgjo's answer to this expression, but Figgjo's true merit when it came to oven-proof products—in terms of commercial success—was their decision to ornate them with decorative motifs. The first of these decors, named *A la Carte*, was designed by Hermann Bongard especially for his own shapes of the *Vulcanus* oven-to-table range [Figure 14-11]. Bongard's employer, Ragnar Grimsrud, was very



Figure 14-11: Parts from the oven-to-table range model number 12000, *Vulcanus* (cordierite-based earthenware) Figgjo, ca. 1959. Decor: *A la Carte*. Designer: Hermann Bongard (3D&2D). (Facsimile from catalogue and photos from Figgjo archive)

pleased with the *A la Carte* design and described it as a “synthesis of art and

52. Although Stavangerflint later chose to launch *Flamingo* with a decor called *Bambus*, designed by Inger Waage, which became highly popular.

technology”.⁵³ When the *Vulcanus* series with *A la Carte* decor was presented in *Bonytt* by Harriet Clayhills, it was celebrated for its “good and practical form of the various objects”, but the journalist was not too happy about the decor:

The decor is said to be necessary facing Norwegian customers, but is the public really not starting to notice how the food and the decor fight for attention when such strongly decorated things are in use?⁵⁴

Figgjo’s *Vulcanus A la Carte* was here presented alongside new, similarly decorated oven-to-table ranges from Stavangerflint (*Mesterkokken* designed by Kåre B. Fjeldsaa and Inger Waage) and Egersund (*Congo* designed by Kåre Johansen), and Clayhills’ critique was directed not against Bongard’s decor design for Figgjo, but against what she deemed to be a general tendency towards excess in decor—she requested that at least *some* of the items were made available in undecorated version. I strongly doubt her article was the direct cause, but Figgjo did offer the *Vulcanus* series in plain white glazing as well.

Although the design of the *Vulcanus* series is attributed to Bongard, it is appropriate to point out that he was not by any means the only one involved in the product development. Like in most design processes, there were several other actors who made essential contributions. The forms of the *Vulcanus* range were developed in close collaboration with Ragnar Grimsrud, Jørg Løve Nielsen and the other designers and technicians of the model and plaster workshop as well as the engineers and chemists of the laboratory.⁵⁵ This is of course the case with any product development process, but I find it opportune to underscore this fact here, especially since this product is attributed to an external designer.

The *A la Carte* decor consists of highly stylized motifs from the animal world, depicting cattle, birds and fish in a style very characteristic of Bongard. Here, the designer has truly met the requirements stipulated in his contract with Figgjo: The *A la Carte* decor is designed in great coherence with the possibilities and preconditions posed by the silk screen printing technique.⁵⁶ Every motif is constructed of five separate, layered templates—one for each colour (red, yellow, green, blue and black), which were in turn printed onto the product. Hence, Bongard’s use of simple outlines with coloured infills also agrees well with this decor technique [Figure 14-12].

When considering the shapes of the *Vulcanus* series, there is one particular design feature which in a simple but convincing way unites the various items and lends a sense of kinship or family feeling to them; the punched oval handle hole. On the tureens and dishes, this oval hole functions as a finger grip or handle. This feature has the great

53. Ragnar Grimsrud, *A la Carte* (draft, probably for a brochure text—Figgjo archive) (“syntese av kunst og teknikk”)

54. Harriet Clayhills, “Fra komfyren til bordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, unpagged (“god og praktisk form på de forskjellige gjenstander... Dekoren sies jo å være nødvendig overfor norske kjøpere, men begynner virkelig ikke publikum å merke hvordan maten og dekoren kjemper om interessen når slike sterkt dekorerte ting er i bruk?”)

55. Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 06.10.1959 (Figgjo archive)

56. Although there were some initial problems in achieving a stable production of the decor prints when going from test prints to large series: Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 18.01.1960 (Figgjo archive)

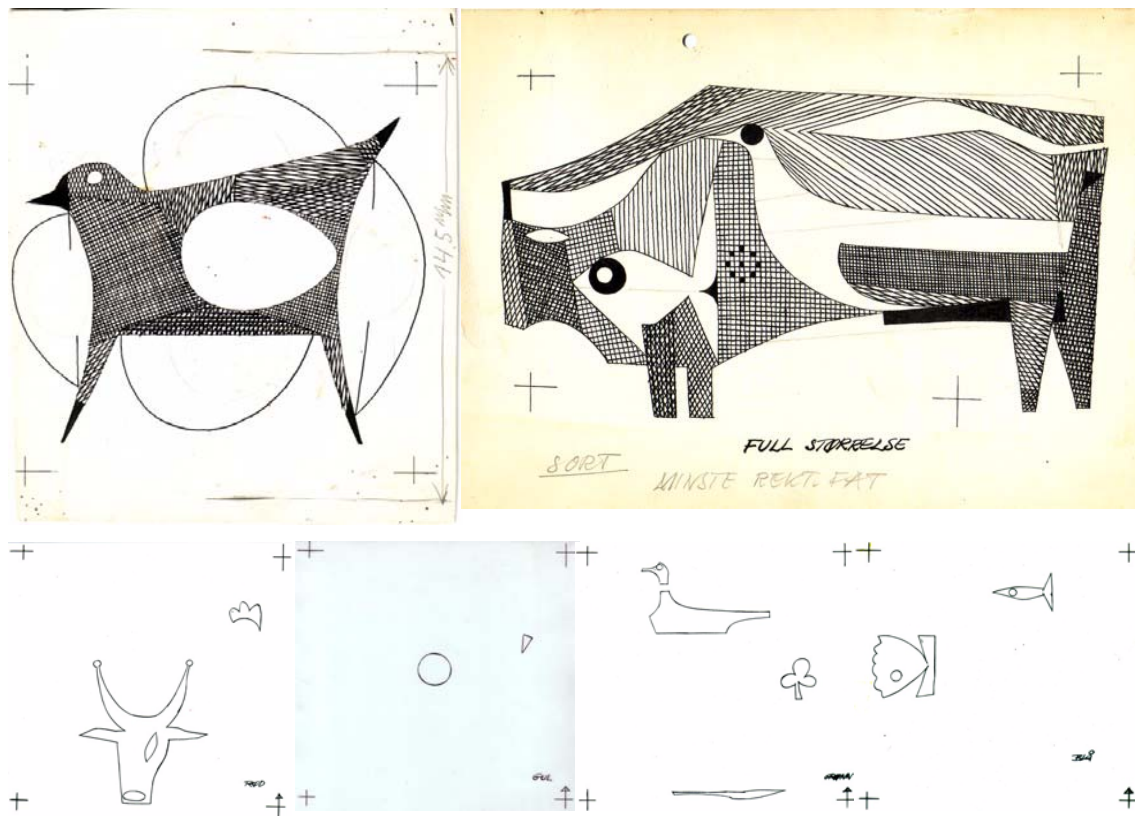


Figure 14-12: Decor template sketches for the *A la Carte* decor by Hermann Bongard. (Facsimile of sketches in Figgjo archive)

advantage that it eliminates the traditional protruding handles which are very vulnerable to breakage. On the frying pans and sauce boats, the oval hole is punched through the handle, facilitating grip variations when the product is in use and hanging when in storage. It is quite fascinating how the very different utilitarian functions of these two product categories are catered to by one and the same design feature and thus creating an overall product group identity which is anything but inherent and obvious. Hence, in this case the form most certainly does not follow function—but the form is nevertheless very much in agreement with the functions [Figure 14-13].

As seen in the previous illustrations, the corpus of the *Vulcanus* soup tureens which were put into series production projected outwards towards the top, affording better access to the opening and better grip angle than the almost straight walls of the prototype shown in [Figure 14-13]. Both this prototype and a prototype of the mass-produced version were selected for the XII Triennale di Milano in 1960, along with white, undecorated versions of the 12009 and 12010 frying pans from the *Vulcanus* series [Figure 14-10].⁵⁷ Choosing to exhibit prototypes rather than the mass-produced versions may be considered odd, especially since the Norwegian organizing committee claimed to exhibit

utensils in current use in Norwegian homes, with the intention of demonstrating how the collaboration between industry and designers leads to results of considerable interest, both



Figure 14–13: Parts from the oven-to-table range model number 12000, *Vulcanus* (cordierite-based earthenware) Figgjo, ca. 1959. Designer: Hermann Bongard. Top left: Sauce boat. Right: Detail of handles. Bottom left: Prototype of a soup tureen. (Photos from Figgjo archive (top left) and Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.*)

from a functional and a formal point of view.⁵⁸

-
57. Ivan Matteo Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *Catalogo della Dodicesima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1960) p 118. In addition to these products designed by Hermann Bongard, another Figgjo product was also selected for the XII Triennale: a mocha set in matte black glaze designed by Ragnar Grimsrud. Although it was not a prototype, the mocha set was a limited edition low volume production: Stranger, *op.cit.* p 37. Hence, neither of the Figgjo products exhibited at the XII Triennale—perhaps with the exception of the *Vulcanus* frying pans—could be considered “utensils in current use in Norwegian homes”, nor did they make up the company’s livelihood: Ferdinand Aars and Odd Brochmann, “Norvegia” in Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *op.cit.* p 30 (“oggetti d’uso corrente nelle case norvegesi”)
58. Aars and Brochmann, *op.cit.* p 30 (“oggetti d’uso corrente nelle case norvegesi, con l’intento di dimostrare come la collaborazione tra industrial e designers conduca a risultati di notevole interesse, sia dal punto di vista funzionale che formale.”)

A plausible explanation could be that Aars & co. found greater aesthetic pleasure in the somewhat rugged glazing of the prototypes—because they protected their retreat by adding that in addition to the “utensils in current use”, some “test products” were shown too, insofar as these could “orient and stimulate the industrial production.”⁵⁹

Bongard’s oven-proof products lived a long life. Later, parts from the 12000-series oven-to-table range, like the soup tureens, the sauce boats and the frying pans were integrated into the major service series by being equipped with their decor motifs. Hence, Bongard’s oven-to-table products remained in production well into the 1970s, their strong formal character heavily influencing Figgjo’s product identity throughout the period.⁶⁰

Studio ceramist, *Bonytt* co-editor and SHKS teacher Jens von der Lippe went a long way in declaring Bongard a genius. However, being a studio ceramist and artisan, he did not care much for the industrial material earthenware. All the more reason to be impressed with Bongard, then, he thought:

With all its other good properties, earthenware is probably the ceramic material which has the most modest intrinsic character. On the other hand, it willingly receives the character values which can be supplied by a designer, something which means that the designer alone is responsible for the characteristics the product can get, without the support from material character provided by many other materials. Here, Bongard managed with his sense of clarity... to design a wide variety of excellent things.⁶¹

Von der Lippe’s admiration for Bongard’s designs in earthenware for Figgjo is thus based on the same logic as the Kantian definition of a great artist: the greater talent is he who *by choice* shows his genius by operating at a seemingly inferior level.⁶² Needless to say, this logic only functions if you second von der Lippe’s opinion of industrial materials as “inferior”.⁶³

Jens von der Lippe’s ideas of the design process were utterly consistent with his views of the “genius” designer: “It is completely normal that the production of an idea leaves its originator absolutely exhausted.”⁶⁴ Bongard himself had a less romantic approach to it. Acknowledging his limited expertise in industrial production, craft traditions, technology, business economics, marketing, etc., he instead stressed that “[o]ne of the most important things for an industrial designer must be to be able to collaborate with the many who are involved in the process”.⁶⁵ Though assuming the role

59. *Ibid.* (“prove... orientare e stimolare la produzione industriale.”)

60. The “pure” oven-to-table ranges (*Vulcanus Leif Viking & A la Carte*), however, did not get a promising start in terms of sales. In 1960, Figgjo’s sales manager Harald Torgersen described the oven-to-table sales as “very slow” but also stated that “Oven-to-table will hopefully yield good results”: Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 21.01.1960 (Figgjo archive) (“meget smått”) and Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 22.02.1960 (Figgjo archive) (“Ildfast vil forhåpentlig gi gode resultater”)

61. Jens von der Lippe, “Den allsidige Bongard” in Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.* p 53-55 (“Med alle gode egenskaper for øvrig er fajansen vel det keramiske materiale som har mest beskjedne egenkarakter. Til gjengjeld mottar det villig de karakterverdier som en formgiver kan tilføre det, hvilket vil si at formgiveren alene står for det preg produktet kan få, uten den støtten i stofflig karakter som mange andre materialer gir. Bongard maktet her med sin sans for klarhet... å utforme en hel rekke utmerkede ting.”)

62. For a parallel argument in architecture, see: Brent C. Brolin, *Architectural Ornament—Banishment and Return* [Revised edition of *Flight of Fancy*, 1.ed. 1985] (London: W.W. Norton, 2000) p 229

of coordinator and facilitator so essential to the work as designer, Bongard's own personal area of expertise was aesthetics. Von der Lippe saw him as one who brought beauty to materials and objects which in principle were ugly. Even Bongard himself considered his primary competence to be the aspects of design regarding formal conceptualization. As he expressed it—with great understatement: “I think maybe I know how to draw”.⁶⁶

Before Bongard's collaboration with Figgjo ended in 1964, it bore many and different fruits. In addition to those already discussed, one might mention projects of such different character as moulded, two-coloured bowls, some parts for a tea set intended for the professional market, a vase, and tiles for decorative wall covering [Figure 14-14].⁶⁷ The vase and the tiles both make use of the same design feature—the pyramid relief, albeit in very different scale. An interesting anecdote is that this characteristic design feature has later been re-used at Figgjo, e.g. in a 1970s oil lamp and in the *Pyramide* dish from 2001 designed by Olav Joa.

As mentioned above, Figgjo initially employed Bongard as a graphic designer, but in the course of their co-operation he also functioned as a product designer. That an earthenware manufacturer trusted product design projects to someone with no training in nor experience from ceramic production is quite remarkable. In fact, hiring a freelance (product) designer alone was unusual in an industry where most products were designed by in-house designers trained as ceramists. Just how progressive Figgjo's collaboration with Bongard must have been considered at the time can be illustrated by a concern expressed in the British Board of Trade *Journal* in 1961 over the conservative attitudes precisely regarding the use of freelance designers in the British pottery industry—an industry which on most accounts was the Norwegian pottery industry's role model:

There is extreme conservatism in the industry about the employment of free lance designers... The reluctance to employ free lance designers is based on the feeling in the industry that only a designer who knows the problems of production and in particular the problems of his own firm can be relied on... designs in British pottery tend to lag behind the introduction of new designs by the industries in, for example, the Scandinavian

63. Von der Lippe's depreciatory attitude towards earthenware certainly was not universal in the Norwegian design community. For instance, the interior architect Anne-Lise Aas wrote that “Earthenware is a good utility material, durable and with a plastic malleability which constantly invokes new modes of expression from the designer, and with a warm radiance from the material's yellowish white colour. It is a simple and unsnobbish material adaptable to any environment when the object is designed by the particular features of earthenware and one has not strove to imitate the characteristics of porcelain.”: Anne-Lise Aas, “Keramikk og glass” in Ingeborg Dobloug Altern and Halvor Pedersen (eds.), *Hjemmet og vi—en bok om liv og arbeid* (Oslo: Norsk faglitteratur—G. Reinert, 1955) p 205 (“Flint er et godt bruksmateriale, holdbart og med en plastisk mykhet som innbyr formgiveren til stadig nye uttrykksmidler, og med en varm glans over godsets gulhvite farge. Det er et enkelt og usnobbet materiale som kan passes inn i ethvert miljø når bare gjenstanden er utformet etter flintens spesielle karakter og en ikke har prøvd å etterligne porselenets særegenheter.”)

64. von der Lippe, *op.cit.* p 43 (“Det er helt normalt at frembringelsen av en idé etterlater sin opphavsmann fullstendig utkjørt.”)

65. Hermann Bongard cited in *Ibid.* (“Noe av det viktigste for en industridesigner må være dette å kunne samarbeide med de mange som er koblet inn i prosessen”)

66. *Ibid.* p 45 (“Jeg mener kanskje at jeg kan tegne”)

67. Bongard used these pyramidal tiles as bottom covering in a decorative pool/fountain he was commissioned to design at Tåsen in Oslo: Liv Schjødt, “Dekorativt vannbasseng” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 16-17

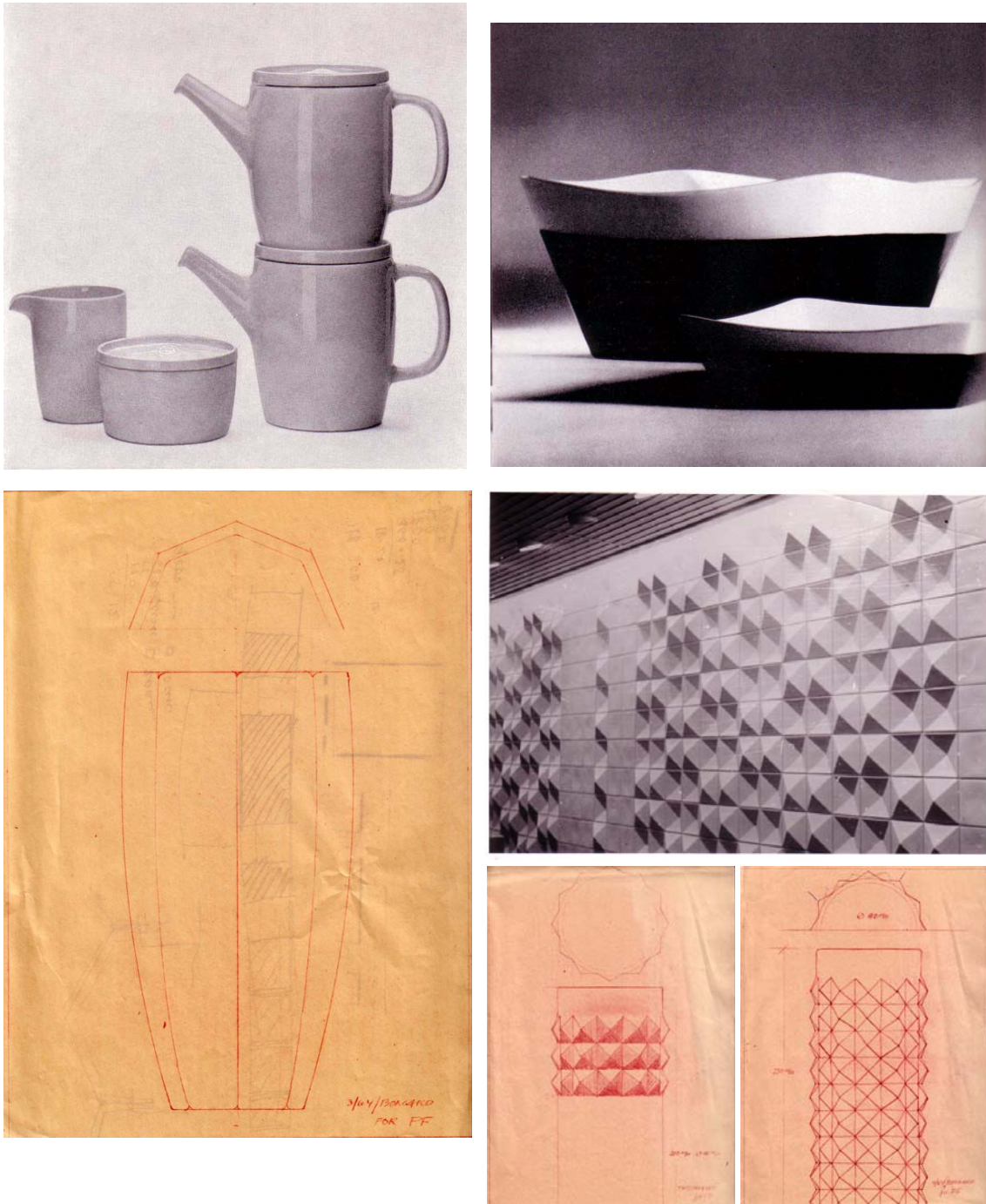


Figure 14–14: Various projects by Hermann Bongard for Figgjo. Top left: Parts from a tea set (1962). Exhibited at the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art's 1962 Autumnal Exhibition and purchased by the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo).^a Top right: moulded, two-coloured (white and cobalt blue) bowls (1961). Middle right: wall tiles with pyramidal reliefs (1962). Bottom left: Design for an faceted, octagonal vase (1964). Bottom middle and right: Designs for vases with pyramidal reliefs (1964). (Facsimile of sketches and photos from Figgjo archive (middle right), Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.* and Bøe, *op.cit.*)

a. Arne Remlov, "Disiplin og fantasi—Inntrykk fra årets brukskunstmønstring" in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 237-238

countries.⁶⁸

After his cooperation with Figgjo and Polaris ended, Hermann Bongard's career as industrial designer was more or less over. In 1960, he took over after Arne Lindaas as artistic director of the applied art colony (*brukskunstkolonien*) Plus, established in Fredrikstad in 1958 by former *Bonytt* editor Per Tannum.⁶⁹ Bongard had always done various graphic design projects in between and alongside other tasks, but this his original trade would again be dominant from 1966 when he was hired as design manager at the publishing house J.W. Cappelens Forlag.⁷⁰ His career came full circle when he in 1968 returned to his *alma mater* as he was appointed lecturer in graphic design at the National College of Arts and Crafts (Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) in Oslo, and senior lecturer from 1971.

14.4 Forced free trade: Figgjo and Norway towards EFTA

Norwegian national economy and business policy underwent dramatic changes during the 1950s, and these macroeconomic developments made great impact on private industrial enterprises—including Figgjo. The motivation behind USA's Marshall plan was to rebuild and propel the European production systems after World War II.⁷¹ Inter-European and general international trade was seen as prerequisite to succeed, and as a means to this, the receiving countries were forced to reduce and remove their habitual and plentiful quantitative restrictions and tariff barriers in their foreign trade. The Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) became important instruments in this process.⁷²

Norway ventured into international free trade agreements rather reluctantly. When the possibilities for a Nordic customs union and/or free trade area were investigated in the early 1950s, a governmental report stated that

“in Norway it is for the time being enough tasks on the domestic market, and... the

68. Quoted in: Paddy Maguire, “Craft Capitalism and the Projection of British Industry in the 1950s and 1960s” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993 p 100

69. Wenche Anette Johannessen, *Brukskunst-senteret PLUS—Per Tannums ønske om å etablere et designsentrum* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 67, n 153

70. Arne E. Holm, “Arbeidet med bokstav, bind og tegning” in Opstad (ed.), *op.cit.* p 70

71. That the USA also by these means hoped to stagger socialism in Western Europe is quite clear. In the case of Norway, the government displayed a very ambivalent attitude towards the Marshall aid offering in 1947. After Norway had received USD 425 million over a four-year period (1948-1952), a committee of leading socialist politicians and labour unionists presented in 1952 a radical draft for a bill regarding permanent price- and rationalization regulations to the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet) government. This bill, if proposed and passed, would have shifted Norwegian economic policy drastically toward a planned economy of a fairly “eastern”/“red” scent. After massive protests from Norwegian industry and commerce, however, the bill was only proposed and passed in a severely moderated version. The far more capitalistic development centred on technocracy, private initiative, competition and market demand which followed instead can not be fully understood if not seen in connection with the Marshall plan and other international macroeconomic relations: Francis Sejersted, *Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder—Norge og Sverige i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Pax, 2005) p 330

72. Fritz Hodne, *Norges økonomiske historie 1815-1970* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1981) p 551-560

industry is thus not interested in neither export nor in expanding the domestic market to other Nordic countries.⁷³

Although the report was based on a questionnaire distributed among industrial managers, the views expressed here are probably more those of government officials than those of industrialists themselves. Nevertheless, the report is quite instructive as to understanding the political guidelines and macroeconomic conditions for Norwegian industry in the 1950s. Towards the end of the fifties, especially after the founding of EEC in 1957, this protectionist, autarkic policy seemed increasingly reactionary. The international development towards free trade accelerated, and Norwegian industry eventually lost most of the domestic market protection the government had provided through import restrictions and tariff barriers. With labour and production costs already reaching a relatively high level and thus making imported goods a dreaded competitor, Norwegian industry had to venture into export to survive. Although not being among the six founding countries of the 1957 European Economic Community (EEC), nor joining what has developed into the European Union (EU) ever since—despite negotiating for membership three times—Norway did join the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960, providing Norwegian industry with many of the same terms of export.

Naturally, Figgjo too had to relate to this new and complex market situation. At the outset of the 1950s, the company operated alongside their two national competitors Egersund Fayancefabrik and Stavangerflint on a domestic market characterized by a demand which exceeded the supply. Towards the end of the decade, the doors to Europe were opening. It may seem, however, that the door sill on the Norwegian side was much higher than that on the European side. Cheap, Central European tableware alongside more reputable goods from the other Nordic countries and Great Britain washed in through the opened doors, creating a great diversity and supply on the Norwegian market—much to the pleasure of the merchants.⁷⁴

Walking *out* the door was not as easy. To Figgjo, the expectations of a common market represented both threats—in terms of increased competition—and opportunities—in terms of increased export potential. But realizing this potential was no picnic. We have seen that Figgjo from the mid-fifties had managed to establish a respectable export on a few foreign markets, with *Sissel* as the prime mover. 1958 became an all-time low for Figgjo on the domestic market, and this only emphasized the importance of finding and developing export markets. Up until this point, Sweden and Great Britain had been their major export markets, showing better and better results year

73. Report from the joint Nordic commission published March 1954, p 61—appendix to *Stortingsmelding Nr. 87* (white paper), quoted in Sejersted, *op.cit.* p 224 (“i Norge foreløpig er arbeidsoppgaver nok på hjemmemarkedet, og... industrien derfor ikke er interessert verken i eksport eller i å utvide hjemmemarkedet til andre nordiske land.”)

74. The National Association of Glassware and Crockery Merchants (Glass- og steintøyhandlernes Landsforbund) had campaigned for this for many years. See e.g.: N.N., “Friere import, krever glass- og steintøyhandlerne” in *Stavangeren*, 14.09.1953. It is interesting to note that even though the USA was a chief proponent of and driving force behind the development of international free trade, the American ceramics industry too faced its (especially GATT) consequences in terms of increased competition from imports on the domestic market in a manner quite similar to that of the Norwegian: Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) p 252-253

by year. But the new domestic situation called for new measures, and initiatives were taken on big markets like Germany and France. Still, sales manager Harald Torgersen asserted that

we not under any circumstances will be able to manipulate the foreign markets so effectively that the economic fluctuations will pass unnoticed over our heads. The domestic situation will always be the most determinant⁷⁵

As early as the late fifties, the majority of the Norwegian manufactured goods industry—including Figgjo—had realized that due to developments in labour and production costs, they could not use prizes as the primary means of competition on the foreign markets. The many small units were also seen as a problem in gaining access to export markets. At the turn of the decade, the three Norwegian earthenware factories (Figgjo, Stavangerflint and Egersund) were planning a joint campaign in their export ventures. Being unable to match the low prizes and high production volumes of many foreign manufacturers, this joint venture was to emphasize what Figgjo et co. considered the distinctive design and quality of the Norwegian products.⁷⁶

Still, the Figgjo management stressed time and again the “necessity of intensifying the efficiency in every chain of the production in order to, if possible, increase the competitiveness through cheaper production.”⁷⁷ There are indications that this was a justifiable position, because although the product quality and production efficiency had improved considerably during the fifties, there was still room for improvements. For instance, the breakage percentage at Figgjo was approximately twice that which was the accepted level at English earthenware factories.⁷⁸

Figgjo braced themselves for harder competition as a result of the impending common market, and concluded that further “automatization and technological development... would undoubtedly [be] essential factors in the future existence of Norwegian industry.”⁷⁹ This assumption seems reasonable enough, at least in retrospect, and it was also backed by a report on organizational rationalization at Figgjo made by the Federation of Norwegian Industries’ Bureau of Rationalization Ltd. (Industriforbundets rationaliseringskontor A/S—IRAS) which stated that “the future development of

75. Harald Torgersen, “Hva vil det nye året bringe oss?” in *Flintpraten* (Figgjo company newsletter), Vol. 3, No. 4, 1958, p 3&12 (“vi ikke under noen omstendigheter vil være istand til å bearbeide det utenlandske marked så effektivt at de økonomiske svingninger vil gå upåaktet over våre hoder. Forholdene innenlands vil alltid være de mest bestemmende”)

76. N.N., “Felles eksportframstøt for våre flintfabrikker” in *Romsdals Budstikke*, 15.12.1959 and N.N., “Festlig til hverdags” in *Adresseavisen* 19.03.1960 In the mid 1960s, the three earthenware factories repeated the joint export venture, this time aimed specifically towards the USA and Canada: Richard Holmesland, “Tre norske fajansefabrikker gjør eksportframstøt i USA og Canada” in *Norges handels og sjøfartstidende*, 10.02.1966. Five furniture factories had ventured a similar but more successful project in 1955 with the establishment of Westnofa A/S, a common marketing and distribution company for the export markets: Fredrik Wildhagen, *Møbeldesigneren Ingmar Relling i perspektiv* (Sykkylven: Sykkylven næringsutvikling A/S, 1991) p 42

77. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 19.03.1958 (Figgjo archive) (“nødvendigheten av å intensivere effektiviteten på alle ledd i produksjonen for om mulig å øke konkurransevnen [sic] i form av billigere produksjon.”)

78. Letter from J. Oliver to Stanley Hind (Undated, 1958) (Figgjo archive)

79. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 19.08.1957 (Figgjo archive) (“automasjon og den tekniske utbygning [sic]... utvilsom [sic] avgjørende faktorer for den norske industris fremtidige eksistens.”)

production technology will be characterized by extensive mechanization and automatization.”⁸⁰

If Figgjo in the wake of increased free trade managed to expand their export markets, it could also be the key to solving a problematic situation which had been built up during the 1950s: the excessive product range. In 1951, Grimsrud had remarked that “The public start demanding a richer assortment of decor.”⁸¹ In their efforts to meet this demand and in line with the policy of offering “something for everyone”, Figgjo had—as we have seen—developed and launched a substantial number of products throughout the fifties.⁸² But towards the end of the decade, this successful strategy was starting to backfire:

We have gotten into a situation where the product range is so big that it actually renders planning completely impossible... The number of articles... is so large that it nearly buries us. It has in this regard been asserted that we should just cut half the assortment. That is not possible with the sales territory we operate today because it would reduce sales too much. So, by expanding the sales territory we could limit the assortment, and hence perhaps facilitate a more stable production and increased possibilities for economic progress.⁸³

Despite having different views on how severe the assortment reduction should be, the management agreed by compromise that something had to be done. A stocktaking and internal audit was conducted, and showed that *Sissel* and *Benta* along with services based on the new *Lade* model were Figgjo’s cash cows at the time. As a result, all the services based on the 1952 *Jarlsberg* model, including the popular *Marie*, were discontinued. 12 decors based on the 1951 *Eidsvoll* model were also eliminated, as well as some decors on other models—e.g. the pink versions of *Grete* and *Sissel*, which seems to have gone out of fashion.⁸⁴ Thus, it was the most traditionalistic/nostalgic products, plus the most ephemeral/fashionable ones, which were discontinued. The assortment reduction was quite drastic, and left a total of 19 services/decors distributed on seven models in Figgjo’s product range.⁸⁵

80. Jens Amtrup and Erling Grende, *Organisatoriske forundersøkelser ved Figgjo Fajanse A/S* (Report from Industriforbundets rationaliseringskontor A/S, 12.08.1958—Figgjo archive) (“utviklingen i fremtiden vil være preget av sterk mekanisering og automatisering innenfor produksjonsteknikken.”)

81. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 07.06.1951 (Figgjo archive) (“Publikum begynner å forlange et rikere utvalg i dekor.”)

82. Ragnar Grimsrud, “Produsenten har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 186-187 (“noe for enhver”)

83. Report from sales manager Harald Torgersen included in Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 06.10.1959 (Figgjo archive) (“Vi er kommet i den stilling at vareutvalget er så stort at det faktisk umuliggjør planlegging i det hele... Artikkelnumrene... er så stort at det holder på å begrave oss. Det har i den anledning vært hevdet at vi skulle bare skjære bort halve utvalget. Det er ikke mulig med det salgsområdet vi idag arbeider på fordi vi derved ville få forlite [sic] salg. Altså ved å utvide salgsområdet kunne vi begrense utvalget, og derved kanskje muliggjøre en stabilere [sic] produksjon og større muligheter for økonomisk fremgang.”)

84. Minutes from management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 07.12.1959 (Figgjo archive)

85. *Ibid.*

14.5 Conclusion

This chapter has probed different ways in which Figgjo in the mid- to late 1950s explored various forms of fancy. As the company managed to establish a well-functioning production system, a revenue-making product portfolio and gained a foothold in the market place, a greater room for product development projects with a higher element of risk and other experimental activities opened up. These resulted in some very interesting design developments, some of which became commercial failures, some never made it into commercial production, and some complemented the established and more carefully planned production.

First we took a closer look at a service that was conceived as a niche product for special occasions, as a additional element to the household. As it was intended not as a basic utensil but as a bonus to the deserving housewife, it was not promoted in the name of rationality and functionality, but in the name of festivity and fashion. In line with this concept, the product's design had utterly modern formal features, but less than ideal properties in terms of rational manufacture. But as it turned out, the market might not have been ready to accept the notion of a service as a fashion accessory, because it ended up becoming a commercial failure. A very different way of exploring forms of fancy came about with a series of experiments with bone china. These can also be seen as exercises in bold, modern design, but as opposed to the project just mentioned, the bone china prototypes never entered commercial production—and were perhaps never intended to.

Figgjo had since the beginning relied exclusively on in-house design expertise in their product development. Except the manager, Ragnar Grimsrud, none of the designers seems to have had any direct involvement with the national design community—nor did they have much formal design education. Thus, when the company in 1956 hired the acclaimed freelance designer Hermann Bongard, it must be said to represent something of a new direction in terms of design activity. For a number of years, Bongard worked on different kinds of projects for Figgjo—some with detailed briefs and strict guidelines intended to be included in the mass-production series, others of a far more experimental character. The irony, perhaps, is that it was primarily with the latter, commercially insignificant projects that Bongard helped raise Figgjo's recognition in the Norwegian design community.

Also, on a more general note, the projects and period discussed in this chapter represent a degree of alignment, proximity and communication between the design practice at Figgjo and the design debates in the national design community that surpassed all prior contact and that would soon return to a more habitual condition. This is also an indication that the latter half of the 1950s was the period in which the networks negotiated in the Norwegian design discourse reached their greatest extension and momentum. However, as we shall see soon, one might say that critical mass was not quite achieved.

The last part of this chapter sidetracked the investigation of Figgjo's more experimental and radically modern design activities and discussed instead the developments towards increased international free trade, focusing on how Figgjo tried to

position themselves in light of the rapidly and radically changing market situation. In order to survive, the company management went to great lengths in rationalising their production and carving out a niche for themselves in the new economic world order.

This chapter concludes our analysis of how Figgjo tackled the many *translations on the table* in the 1950s and how they *negotiated design networks*. We shall now move on to last period under investigation in this study, a period characterised by *reconfiguring design cultures*. The next chapter introduces the discussions on various attempts at *clearing the table* by exploring the formation of new positions and agendas in the Norwegian design community.

Conclusion: Negotiating Design Networks

There should be no doubt, now, that the 1950s was an eventful and adventurous decade for Norwegian design ideology and mediation. The decade of “the economic wonder” hit Norway hard and saw a growth in consumption of unprecedented proportions. It was characterized by the formation of the welfare-state, vast expansions of the bureaucracy, and extensive industrial developments. The modernization of the Norwegian society also involved a widespread institutionalization of interest groups and a general professionalization. As we have seen, this was the case with the Norwegian design community as well.

One topic that dominated the first years of the 1950s and which would resurface in different versions throughout the decade was the relation between design and manufacturing systems, i.e. craft-based systems and industrial production. In its first round, this debate was dominated by arguments *pro et contra* the virtues of mass-production. Some expressed their worry for the inhumanity of industrial production and a subsequent vulgarization of material culture and design. A perhaps more valid and well-founded argument was the question suitability: Did the mere size of the public, markets and industry in the Nordic countries at all allow for industrial mass-production?

When comparing the early 1950s to the 1940s, there is one development which is particularly striking. While, as we have seen earlier, the first postwar years were dominated by a debate on national characteristics and the desire to find and cultivate specific *Norwegian* traits in Norwegian design, this debate virtually disintegrated around 1950.¹ Throughout the 1950s, the quest for national identity through heritage is replaced by a pan-Scandinavian or pan-Nordic attitude where the different national communities are seen to have more similarities than differences. International relations and networks grew fast and wide on all arenas, and the intensified internationalization of culture, politics, economy and industry would strongly affect the sphere of design as well. Like designer Tias Eckhoff put it in 1953:

That our applied art gets an international stamp is just as natural as technological knowledge, production experience and the market being international property. The main point for us must always be that the things we make should be as usable as possible... Furthermore, they should be easy to manufacture, so that they become cheap and robust. If those who create the things have too determined, purely formal ideals in their creation—be that national, international or whatever else—then it easily is at the sacrifice of usability and production costs. And “style”, our old friend and enemy, often surfaces a bit too

1. At least in the internal discussions—elements of national heritage were often mentioned when addressing a foreign public throughout the 1950s. A good example can be found in Ferdinand Aars’ little booklet on Norwegian design intended for promotion abroad published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After enrolling fiords, vikings and stave churches, Aars claimed that “A national note is sounded: a purely modern internationalism is in no way the goal which the Norwegian craftsman has set out to attain.”: Ferdinand Aars, *Arts and Crafts—Industrial Design in Norway* (Oslo: The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Office of Cultural Relations, 1953) p 6-7. In a later revised and expanded version of this publication, Aars upheld this line of reasoning, claiming that “Norway has developed a distinctive and independent style of its own.”: Ferdinand Aars, *Arts and Crafts—Industrial Design in Norway* (Oslo: Dreyers forlag & The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Office of Cultural Relations, 1957) p 8

much.²

This shift of focus is definitely remarkable, but not all that surprising. The somewhat romantic and grandiloquent nationalism which quite understandably dominated the first postwar years was soon toned down, and questions regarding the place and role of a small nation like Norway in a rapidly internationalizing world took precedence.

Another line of development which characterizes the 1950s is the swan song of the broad unity of social vocation. At the beginning of the decade, the massive reconstruction after the war still had a considerable impact on the design community. But the general agreement that social responsibility and aiding increases in prosperity for the general public should be the principal aims and virtues of the designers was challenged. Strong forces deeply rooted in the traditions of the applied art community strove to (re-)establish the artistic expression as the core value of their activity. At the same time, other fractions and sub-networks sought to explore the challenges and possibilities offered by large-scale rational industrial production. The “gap” which was opened here marked the beginning of a process spanning two decades through which the term and field of applied art was fractionated into two more restrictively delimited terms and fields; handicrafts and industrial design.

When considering the extrovert initiatives taken on behalf of Norwegian design during the 1950s, and especially those explicitly intended to promote exports, this divide is not only evident, but conspicuous and highly consequential. Both the leading circles of the applied art movement as well as the involved political and bureaucratic networks seemed to agree that Norwegian industrial design, due to high production costs and limited production volumes, stood little or no chance on large international markets. Thus, what was officially promoted for export was to a great extent more exclusive, craft-based products. However, the old *Paulssonian* idea of *more beautiful everyday goods* (*vackrare vardagsvara*) was not abandoned. The 1950s saw an immense industrial development, including the establishment and growth of many companies in the finished goods industry—such as Figgjo and Stavangerflint. And it was here, where compromise and pragmatism was allowed, rather than among the applied art community’s elite that the ideas of democratic design would prosper.

The survival of these businesses and their modern designs was of course closely tied to market potential and market penetration; in other words that a wider public accepted and requested a more modern formal language. As the masses domesticated the modern design of affordable domestic utensils, those already initiated to abstract aesthetics—i.e. the cultural elite—developed more subtle declarations of their creed. Hence, the distinctive power of taste did not by any means disappear with the diffusion of modernist design.

2. Tias Eckhoff, “Brukskunsts høstmøstring 1953” in *Bonytt* Vol. 13, 1953, p 193 (“At vår brukskunst får internasjonalt tilsnitt er like naturlig som at teknisk kunnskap, produksjonserfaring og marked er internasjonale eiendom. Hovedsaken må alltid bli at tingene vi lager bør være mest mulig brukbare... Videre bør de være lette å produsere slik at de blir billige og solide. Hvis de som former tingene har for bestemte, rent formale idealer i sin skaping—det være seg nasjonale, internasjonale eller hva det måtte være—da går det lett utover brukbarheten og produksjonsutgiftene. Og “stilen”, vår gamle venn og fiende, kommer ofte litt for sterkt inn i bildet.”)

But although many things had changed during the 1950s, many things were also still the same. For instance, *Bonytt* kept bringing articles intended as manuals or helping hands to young people about to settle down and create a home. The decade even closed with the inauguration of a new such series entitled “Furniture for the home”.³ The debate on design ideology grew decisively more complex, fragmented and faceted, and the importance of making translations between the various actors, interests and sub-networks grew accordingly. But the basic idea that propagating good design was not only fruitful, but even necessary, was never doubted nor questioned. One might argue over what good, modern design *was*, but the importance of the missionary work was still taken for granted. The complexity and fragmentation made the domestication of design ideology more difficult, and put translations on the agenda.

The latter chapters started out by studying the structural relations making up the framework for the production at Figgjo: the development of the plant into a modern factory, the scientification of business management, the rationalization of the production run, the advances in material technology, and the mechanization of production processes. As shown, these factors were intimately linked to the design ideology which came to guide the product development at Figgjo throughout the 1950s. Ragnar Grimsrud’s statement that “[o]ne must offer “something for everyone”” pretty much sums up Figgjo’s design strategy in the 1950s.⁴

We have seen this strategy result in a large number of products being developed at Figgjo throughout the fifties. The Norwegian post-war market for mass-produced, affordable and utilitarian tableware was great, and this is what the Figgjo entrepreneurs set out to supply the modern home with—services for any wallet, occasion and taste. The story of the products has also revealed the drastic developments Figgjo went through during the 1950s. In the first years, just managing to produce a limited range of highly ordinary products with acceptable technical quality was challenging enough. At the end of the decade, the problems had changed to an excessive product differentiation.

The character of all these products and their design was highly differentiated, spanning from nostalgic to modernist, from invented traditions to invented modernities, from commercial failures to export successes, and from experimental prototypes to product series of great diffusion and longevity. (In addition to the main products discussed above, Figgjo developed and launched another new service model towards the end of the fifties. This model was called *Lade*, series number 800, and was introduced in 1958. However, services based on the *Lade* model belong mostly to the next decade, and will thus be dealt with later).

The first years following the conversion to earthenware factory, Figgjo did not generate much interest or enthusiasm from the design community. This changed quite markedly in 1954, much due to the launching of the *Sissel* service, and participation in highly profiled events like e.g. the *X Triennale di Milano* and the *Design in Scandinavia* exhibitions. This development towards professional acknowledgement was only

3. Arne Remlov, “Møbler til hjemmet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 202-204

4. Ragnar Grimsrud, “Produsenten har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p 186-187 (“En er nødt til å bringe “noe for enhver.”)

furthered by the collaboration with the acclaimed freelance designer Hermann Bongard from 1956.⁵

The rapid developments in international free trade during the 1950s had a heavy impact on Figgjo. The reduction and abolition of import restrictions and toll barriers effectively removed the protection on the domestic market and necessitated increased efforts on the export markets. At Figgjo this development was met with a mixture of anxiety and optimism. The prospects of free trade became something of a catalyst for the further rationalization of both production and organization, which was seen as the best way to meet the expected increase in competition.

Before we continue this investigation of production, technology, design, marketing and strategy at Figgjo, it is now time to pick up where we left the negotiations of design ideology and mediation and see how this debate developed throughout the turbulent 1960s.

5. Another indication that Figgjo around this time was reaching a certain level of acknowledgment in the design community is that Ragnar Grimsrud from 1957 (to 1972) was on the expert committee (*fagutvalget*) for the department of ceramics at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens Håndverks- og Kunstindustriskole—SHKS)—although he was appointed by the Federation of Norwegian Industries (Norges Industriforbund): Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunsterleksikon* Vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982) p 783-784

Part V:

Reconfiguring Design Cultures

Introduction: Reconfiguring Design Cultures

The Norwegian political landscape of the 1960s was far more turbulent than the previous decade. The social democratic absolute majority governments which had facilitated the extraordinary political stability and predictability of the 1950s came to an end with the defeat of the Labour party (Arbeiderpartiet) in the 1961 election. After 28 years of Labour party governments, the 1960s saw five cabinet crisis in nine years. The social democratic political advantage was being challenged.¹

This did not, however, mean the end of the social democratic order or society. The social democrat Einar Gerhardsen—with the descriptive nickname “the national father” (“landsfaderen”)—remained in the office of Prime Minister until 1965.² The all-party agreement on the introduction of new universal National Insurance Act (Folketrygdloven) in 1966—which the historian Francis Sejersted has labelled “the crowning glory in the development of the welfare state”—showed that far-reaching social reforms, as well as other steps towards a modern welfare state, could be negotiated with relative ease and concord despite more turbulent party politics.³

One aspect of this development was the massive expansion of both central and local government administration which came as a result of reforms in fields like health and education. In turn, this expansion led to increased public employment and spending, which again propelled processes of urbanization and centralization, as well as alterations in industry structures, family structures and organization.⁴ The other side to this implementation of the welfare state was a remarkable industrial growth. The historian Berge Furre has dubbed the 1960s the “‘golden years’ for Norwegian industry” and argued that the industry was the motor in the dramatic increase in both public and private prosperity in the course of the 1960s.⁵ As we have seen above, many of the preconditions for an improved welfare systems, increased private consumption and higher living standards were developed during the 1950s. But it was the 1960s which embodied the emancipation or fulfilment of a Norwegian consumer society—as well as, towards the end of the decade, a growing critique thereof.

The most emblematic events inaugurating the consumer society in Norway were undoubtedly the 1960 abolition of the restrictions on the purchase of private cars and the onset of official, regular television broadcasting in 1961. Television created widespread enchantment among the public, much due to its entertainment qualities. The intellectual debate regarding this powerful media, however, was largely centred on whether it brought about a vulgarization or a democratization of culture.⁶ The deregulation of the private car was no less controversial. These restrictions had been the last remains of the

1. Berge Furre, *Norsk historie 1905-1990* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1992) p 296

2. Interrupted by a short interlude of conservative government in 1963

3. Francis Sejersted, *Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder—Norge og Sverige i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Pax, 2005) p 282 (“kronen på verket i utviklingen av velferdsstaten”)

4. Furre, *op.cit.*

5. *Ibid.* p 295-299 (“‘gylne år’ for norsk industri”)

6. Christine Myrvang, “Fra knapphet til overflod—Jakten på det rasjonelle massekonsumet” in Christine Myrvang, Sissel Myklebust and Brita Brenna, *Temmet eller uhemmet—Historiske perspektiver på konsum, kultur og dannelse* (Oslo: Pax, 2004) p 315-316

postwar rationing systems, and their abolition can be said to invoke a new era. Furre even dates the onset of what he calls “the new society” to October 1st 1960—the day the newspaper *Aftenposten* declared that “now the car is free”.⁷ Similarly, the historian Christine Myrvang calls this date “the breakthrough of mass-consumption”.⁸ In the 1950s, the private car had in Norway largely been connoted to unnecessary luxury. Now, the car became available to large parts of the population and symbolized personal freedom, success and prosperity.⁹

In a public sphere characterized by an anxious and highly ambivalent attitude towards consumption—recalling Francis Sejersted’s observation that the social democrats “did not like the affluent society, but they contributed to its realization”—the proliferation of private motoring was anything but unproblematic.¹⁰ The car and all its ethical, social and physical implications became a virtual battleground in the 1960s construing a highly intricate actor network where human as well as non-human actants negotiated widely diverging topics such as e.g. the joy of motoring and the environmental impact of infrastructure development.¹¹ The car was also one of the protagonists when, at the turn of the decade, modernity became troublesome.¹²

Towards the end of the 1960s, a forceful radicalization of the social democracy emerged, with the student rebellions of 1968 and the Socialist Youth Union’s (Sosialistisk ungdomsforbund (SUF)) break with the mother party Socialist People’s Party (Sosialistisk folkeparti (SF)) in 1969 as the most evident demonstrations.¹³ Of course, when push came to shove, not all of these young radicals practised what they preached—many of the conventions they so vehemently opposed caught up with them as well.¹⁴

Notwithstanding, many aspects of society which hitherto had been taken for granted, seen as natural/symbolic contributory factors in the development of modern society or acceptable side effects thereof—such as urbanization, centralization, industrialization, migration, alienation, internationalization, commercialization, rationalization—were

7. *Aftenposten*, 01.10.1960 (“Nå er bilen fri”) and Furre, *op.cit.* p 309 (“det nye samfunnet”). Furre here erroneously dates the event to April 1st, but that does not alter the importance of this watershed. For a detailed analysis of this event, see: Per Østby, *Flukten fra Detroit: Bilens integrasjon i det norske samfunnet* [Doctoral dissertation / STS rapport no. 24] (Trondheim: Universitetet i Trondheim, 1995) p 291-301

8. Myrvang *op.cit.* p 316 (“massekonsumentets gjennombrudd”)

9. For international perspectives on automobile culture, see e.g.: Peter Wollen and Joe Kerr (eds.), *Autopia—Cars and Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2002), Wolfgang Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile—Looking Back into the History of Our Desires* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), James J. Flink, *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), David Gartman, *Auto Opium—A Social History of American Automobile Design* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), Penny Sparke, *A Century of Car Design* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2002), Daniel Miller (ed.), *Car Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), and Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965)

10. Sejersted, *op.cit.* p 350 (“De likte ikke overflodssamfunnet, men de bidro til å realisere det”)

11. For a comprehensive study of the domestication of the car into Norwegian society, see: Østby, *op.cit.* For a short survey of how private cars and motoring (as well as other means of transport) have influenced Norwegian architecture in terms of gas stations, bridges, roadhouses, etc., see: Ingunn Haraldsen, “Transport: Det mobile århundret” in Ulf Grønvold (ed.), *Hundre års nasjonsbygging—Arkitektur og samfunn 1905-2005* (Oslo: Pax, 2005) p 8-23

12. Sejersted labels the 1970s “troublesome modernity”: Sejersted, *op.cit.* p 361-406 (“besværlig modernitet”)

13. SUF would in 1973 evolve into a new and highly radical left-wing party, the Worker’s Communist Party (Arbeidernes kommunistparti (AKP))

questioned. Especially the primacy of industry and consumption was criticised harshly. Whatever happened to well-being in the welfare state? Whatever happened to safety and familiarity in a rapidly modernizing society? Did economic values flourish at the expense of human values? Could environment and resources sustain the consumer society?¹⁵ As the 1970s set in, the world (or at least parts of it) even fell out of love with the automobile.¹⁶

In addition to political radicalization and popular agitation, the 1960s also saw a profusion of intellectual criticism of the modern consumer society. Recalling concerns earlier expressed by novelists Aldous Huxley and George Orwell, American social critics such as journalist Vance Packard and economist John K. Galbraith had already gained a considerable following and international influence.¹⁷ These ideas reached the Norwegian debates on consumer criticism e.g. through the writings of the author Axel Jensen and the philosopher Hans Skjervheim, but were interestingly enough also discussed in the marketing and advertising community—albeit with a different motivation.¹⁸

In the sphere of architecture, the increasingly troublesome modernity was sought “healed” both from within and from without: logias of the day became concepts such as meaning, context, intentions, symbolism, etc.—especially as expressed by the Norwegian architectural theoretician Christian Norberg-Schulz and his American counterpart Robert Venturi.¹⁹ Other problems which gained considerable attention from architects in the 1960s and must be seen in connection with the issuant consumer criticism and environmental concerns are topics like heritage, care, restoration, preservation and protection.²⁰

International developments in design ideology was also characterized by great ambiguity and radical changes in the 1960s. The professionalisation of the trade and its recognition from the industry reached new heights. On a European level, the Hochschule

14. The sociologist and writer Nils-Fredrik Nielsen put this quite eloquently and poignantly in an utterly satirical booklet where he criticised the leftist radicals (popularly called 68'ers) of being highly self-important and of overrating their own radicalism and differentness. The booklet is seething with epistles like “68'ers know much more about ordinary people's situation than ordinary people themselves. Ordinary people do thus not feel very comfortable around them.” and “68'ers do not care that much about clothes and must therefore be rather cautious about their outfit.”: Nils-Fredrik Nielsen, *Ekte sekstiåttre spiser ikke seipanetter—portretter fra 68-generasjonens indre og ytre liv* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1984) p 31 & 66 (“Sekstiåttre vet mye mer om vanlige folks situasjon enn vanlige folk selv. Vanlige folk trives derfor ikke så godt sammen med dem... Sekstiåttre bryr seg ikke så mye om klær og må derfor være relativt nøye med sitt antrekk.”)

15. Furre, *op.cit.* p 297

16. Sachs, *op.cit.* p 173-182

17. See e.g. John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958), Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: McKay, 1957), Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers* (New York: McKay, 1959), Vance Packard, *The Waste Makers* (New York: McKay, 1960) and Vance Packard, *The Naked Society* (London: Longmans, 1964). Another startling, but more particular criticism concerning the seductive aspects of design was: Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at any Speed—The designed-in dangers of the American automobile* (New York: Grossman, 1965)

18. Sissel Myklebust, “Flukt og motstand—Outsidere, konsumkritikk og karakterdannelse rundt 1960” and “Farlig kunnskap? Manipulasjon, kommunikasjon og livsstil” in Myrvang, Myklebust and Brenna, *op.cit.* p 321-404

19. See: Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in architecture* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1963) and Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966)

20. See e.g. Fil Hearn, *Ideas That Shaped Buildings* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003) p 281-288

für Gestaltung (HfG) Ulm boosted remarkable industrial and ideological impact. The HfG Ulm was now directed by Tomás Maldonado, who boldly professed that “industrial design is not an art”,²¹ but an activity which could be characterized as *scientific operationalism*.²² But as the 1960s unfolded, the ideological tensions between science, rationalism and industry on the one hand and freedom, humanism and social reform on the other would eventually destroy the institution.²³ Even HfG Ulm, an institution with exceptionally close ties to the pragmatic life of industrial production, became paralysed by the radicalized social criticism of the late 1960s. As the Italian designer and theoretician Andrea Branzi put it:

Ulm’s purity of construction clashed with the consumer-oriented languages of pop art and youth culture, with political protest, with the hybridization of models, and with the syncretism of patterns of behavior. Ulm became a sort of myth to be toppled, a restraint to be overcome.²⁴

The school closed in 1968 after ideological uprisings and an intricate power struggle between faculty and students.²⁵

Probably the most extreme effect and direct link between the 1968 student uprisings and the design establishment came when students blocked the *XIV Triennale di Milano* in June 1968. At this point, several groups in the Italian design community had already left the mainstream modernist idiom through movements dubbed radical/pop-/anti-design.²⁶ These reactions, however, seem to have been based more on dissatisfaction with the aesthetic aspects of conventional modern design rather than radical politics and social criticism, and their impact on mainstream industry was marginal.²⁷

In Germany, several philosophers and social critics turned towards topics intimately linked to architecture and design. Theodor Adorno, for instance, was invited to a Deutsche Werkbund conference in 1965 where he accused modern architecture and design of being utterly paradoxical, even self-contradictory: “the absolute rejection of style becomes style.”²⁸ As the 1960s ended, the both the German philosopher Wolfgang

-
21. Tomás Maldonado, “New Developments in Industry and the Training of Designers” in *Architects’ Yearbook*, Vol. 9, 1960, p 176
 22. Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) p 149-156
 23. *Ibid.* p 176
 24. Andrea Branzi, *Learning From Milan—Design and the Second Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988) p 43
 25. René Spitz, *hfg ulm—The View behind the Foreground : The Political History of the Ulm School of Design 1953-1968* (Stuttgart/London: Edition Axel Menges, 2002) p 368-397
 26. Anty Pansera, *Storia del disegno industriale italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1993) p 231-241, Maurizio Vitta, *Il progetto della bellezza—Il design fra arte e tecnica, 1951-2001* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001) p 279-293 and Andrea Branzi, *Introduzione al design italiano—una modernità incompleta* (Milano: Baldini&Castoldi, 1999) p 128-130
 27. The gradual demise of social vocation among the Italian design elite throughout the 1950s and 1960s is discussed in Penny Sparke, “‘A Home for Everybody?’: Design, Ideology and the Culture of the Home in Italy, 1945-1972” in Paul Greenhalgh (ed.), *Modernism in Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990) p 184-202 and in my master thesis: Kjetil Fallan, *Shaping Sense—Italian post-war functionalistic design* [Master thesis] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2001)
 28. Theodor Adorno, “Functionalism Today” [essay presented to the Deutscher Werkbund conference in 1965] reprinted in Neil Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997) p 10

Haug and the Austrian/American design theoretician Victor Papanek indicted design of being a servant of capitalism.²⁹ Especially Papanek exerted great influence on design students throughout Scandinavia for a long time to come. At this point, the more radical industrial designers in Norway were well under way in constructing a preference for “real problems” such as life rafts and chemical toilets. But the radicalism would prove to be more practical than political in nature.

The 1960s thus proved to be a dramatic decade also for the design community in Norway. The professionalisation and institutionalisation which we have seen gained real momentum in the 1950s continued: Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) put on the first major industrial design exhibition in 1963. In 1963, the Norwegian Export Council (Norges Eksportråd) and the Federation of Norwegian Industries (Norges Industriforbund) founded the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum), which opened in 1965. During the decade, the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) intensified their work for a specialised university level industrial design education—although permanent results would be long in coming.

In 1965, the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet norsk brukskunst) reorganized from a member organization to a coordinating umbrella organization for the various trade unions. But the process of fragmentation of the design professions which began in the mid-fifties continued its arduous negotiations throughout the 1960s while the established applied art community with their holistic/universalist convictions struggled to maintain order and discipline. The industrial design community insisted on being “problem solvers” and the artisan-craftsmen steered towards an identity as “material-based artists”.

In Section A below I will analyse the discourses taking place in the Norwegian design community in this dramatic decade where modernity went from being in its prime to becoming highly troublesome. The 1960s were the “golden years” of Norwegian industry, but also saw the advance of radical and widespread social criticism and political unrest. How was design ideology mediated and negotiated in this environment? The process discussed in the following can be described as various efforts at *clearing the agenda*—and one side to *reconfiguring design cultures*.

As we have seen above, the 1960 establishment of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) meant serious challenges to but also new possibilities for Norwegian industry.³⁰ The opening up of the domestic market meant that only those who managed the readjustment to more export-driven enterprises and competitive operations would survive. For instance, the import restrictions on earthenware and other tableware were cancelled 01.01.1962, and the tariffs on imports from fellow EFTA countries were reduced from 22% to 11%.³¹ Figgjo had hoped this “freelisting” of

29. Wolfgang Haug, *Kritik der Warenästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971) p 137. English translation: Wolfgang Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986) and Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human ecology and social change* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971)

30. In fact, the Nordic countries reduced the tariff rates quicker than what was stipulated in the EFTA agreement: Sejersted, *op.cit.* p 226

earthenware would not happen so soon, and had lobbied with the Ministry of Industry on this point. Their plea was not heard, but Figgjo and other companies in similar situations were granted a loan from the Ministry which was to be spent on export efforts.³²

In the latter half of the 1950s, the retail value of earthenware and thus also the manufacturers' profitability on the domestic market had actually declined about 20%—in spite of the increase in prices. This was to a certain extent compensated for in the early 1960s by way of increased exports. By 1964, the three Norwegian earthenware manufacturers exported ca. 30% of their production, while still controlling between 65 and 70% of the domestic market.³³ In 1966 Figgjo had increased their export to ca. 40% of their production, divided on 22 countries.³⁴ The significance of EFTA for this industry can be illustrated by the fact that 60% of Stavangerflint's exports in 1962 went to EFTA countries, and 25% to EEC countries.³⁵

In the struggle for survival, then, the 1960s became a time of reorganization, rationalization and mergers in Norwegian industry—a phenomenon that would affect Figgjo as well. When the historian Berge Furre has dubbed the 1960s the “golden years’ for Norwegian industry”, he founds his assertion primarily on the fact that the industry as a whole displayed an extensive growth rate throughout the decade: the sector's total growth in production volume amounted to approximately 60%—considerably higher than the Western European average.³⁶ Another fact that lends currency to Furre's label is that the decade ended with a milestone which would transform Norwegian economy for good, namely the discovery of vast quantities of oil on the Norwegian continental shelf in the North Sea on December 23rd 1969.³⁷

The impressive growth in production volume in Norwegian industry during the 1960s does show that many enterprises were in fact “modern” enough to cope with the new market conditions. What it does not show is how the results varied enormously from branch to branch. While e.g. the large metal works prospered, much of the manufactured goods industry struggled hard. The textile and clothing industry was hit first and hardest, and faced massive bankruptcies and close-downs. Common denominators for those parts of the manufactured goods industry which survived and/or prospered seem to be rational production runs, technological know-how, high added value and niche products for international markets.³⁸ One example of such a company, with remarkable export success in the 1960s, is NOBØ—a manufacturer of electric heaters, office furniture and other products made from sheet steel.³⁹ As we shall see in the following, Figgjo as well worked hard to fit this description of a modern industrial company. One of their most important decisions in this respect was a partial reorientation of their product and market

31. N.N., “More Liberalisation” in *Norges handels og sjøfartstidende* 05.01.1962, N.N., “Nye varer på friliste fra 1. jan.” in *Agder Tidend* 02.01.1962 and Lz., “Stavangerflint” in *Stavangeren* 30.03.1963

32. Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 04.04.1960 (Figgjo archive)

33. N.N., “Bransjefolkene bør slå et slag for bordkulturen” in *Bergens Tidene*, spring 1964 (date left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive)

34. N.N., “Fajanseindustrien i Rogaland har solgt for 24 mill. i 1966” in *Rogalands avis*, 31.12.1966

35. Egil Roalkvam (export manager at Stavangerflint) interviewed in K.B., “Middagsserviser fra Stavanger er god salgsvare i Syd-Afrika” in *Rogalands avis*, 10.01.1963

36. Furre, *op.cit.* p 295 (“gylne år’ for norsk industri”) & 298

37. *Ibid.* p 353

strategy towards the professional segment, which was considered to be less price sensitive and have greater future potential.⁴⁰

Despite this significant heterogeneity in Norwegian industry's capability of readjustment, the overall growth and success of the industrial sector as a whole does add strength to the often made claim that the industry was the motor in the dramatic increase in both public and private prosperity in the course of the 1960s.⁴¹ As we have seen above, many of the preconditions for an improved welfare system, increased private consumption and higher living standards were developed during the 1950s. But it was the 1960s that embodied the emancipation or fulfilment of a Norwegian consumer society—as well as, towards the end of the decade, a growing critique thereof.

The first section below will, as mentioned, examine how the design ideology and mediation in the dynamic and turbulent 1960s were characterized by dramatic developments and tensions, spanning from the euphoria of prosperity to the critique of consumption, from sublime aestheticism to fundamental humanism. Section B will once again turn our attention from ideology to practice, from debate to action, and take a closer look at how Figgjo as a company and manufacturer was *clearing the table* in this new societal- and business reality and in their own way were *reconfiguring design cultures*.

38. Fritz Hodne and Ola Honningdal Grytten, *Norsk økonomi i det 20. århundre* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2002) p 233. There are good reasons for considering industrial design integral to all these survival/success factors, and that export manufacture both requires and stimulates the development of design competence. Such an assertion is supported by findings of the Turkish design theoretician H. Alpay Er in his study of industrial design in the so-called Newly Industrialized Countries (NIC): “production for export markets has emerged as the most significant factor stimulating the development of industrial design capabilities”.: H. Alpay Er, “Development Patterns of Industrial Design in the Third World: A Conceptual Model for Newly Industrialized Countries“ in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997 p 298. But of course, stimulation does not mean guarantee. This is shown e.g. by the economic historian Kenneth D. Brown's assertion that the demise of the British toy industry after the proliferation of international free trade in the 1960s must chiefly be attributed to the industry's insufficient commitment to innovative design despite repeated warnings of their backwardness both from delegates in foreign markets, foreign buyers and interested parties at home. So, in this case, the stimulation proved insufficient: Kenneth D. Brown, “Design in the British Toy Industry Since 1945“ in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1998 p 323-333. It should be remembered though, that Britain is surely as far from being a NIC as possible, and its peculiar foreign trade pattern where Commonwealth countries dominated amongst her export markets even long after the establishment of EFTA seems to have diminished the effect of the stimulus.

-
39. Per Østby, “En automatisk fabrikk? Bedriftsetableringer i skjæringspunktet mellom vitenskap og industri” in Olav Wicken (ed.), *Elektronikk-entreprenørene. Studier av norsk elektronikkforskning og -industri etter 1945* (Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal, 1994) p 182. In 1966, Nobø had reached an export share of 17% of their turnover. The company did not belong to the traditional industrial art branch and had no habitual relation to the applied art movement. It is thus interesting to note that they in the wake of the EFTA agreement strengthened the collaboration with external designers. From before, the architect Hermann Semmelmann had designed a radiator for the company in 1946 and the interior architect and furniture designer Arne Halvorsen of the furniture design studio Rastad og Relling (est. 1943) designed “in collaboration with engineers from Nobø” a typist’s desk in 1957. Both these products were chosen for the 1963 exhibition Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) together with an electric heater designed in 1962 by Nobø’s own engineer Johan Geelmuyden. But the new times after 1960 required bigger efforts, also in terms of consultancy design: When Arne Halvorsen, who—like his colleagues at Rastad og Relling—hitherto had worked mostly with wooden furniture, left the design office in 1960 and went freelance he developed a whole series of office furniture in steel which Nobø expected to become a major contribution to their export. This series was awarded the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) Mark of Design Excellence (Merket for god design) in 1966 and received the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) for 1967. The collaboration between Nobø and Halvorsen continued until about 1990. As such, Nobø is a good example of the new liaisons between “hard” industry and the design community which developed in the new and internationally oriented Norwegian marketplace—the actor network was extended in many directions, enrolling actors in many spheres: Alf Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963) p 78, 160, 162, 325 & 328, Harriet Clayhills, “Nye norske kontormøbler” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 144-145 and Alf Bøe, *Den norske Designpris de syv første år / The Norwegian Design Award its first seven years* (Oslo: Norsk Designcentrum, 1969) p 53-54
40. Lars Gaute Jøssang, *Industrieventyret på Jæren 1800-2000* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2004) p 222
41. See e.g. Furre, *op.cit.* p 295-299

Section A:

Clearing the agenda

15 Forming positions, framing practice: The fragmentation of the design field

15.1 Introduction

As we have seen, the considerable expansion of design networks in the 1950s also resulted in a greater diversity and increasing heterogeneity in the design community, requiring extensive negotiations in the efforts at maintaining some sort of common platform and agenda. This process only escalated in the 1960s, to the extent that one may speak of *reconfiguring design cultures*. How was industrial design slowly being constituted as a speciality in its own right? What was to be the role of handicraft in an ever more industrialised society? Why did both industrial designers and craftsmen identify less and less with the holistic applied art movement? How could the applied art community respond to these challenges? This chapter will explore some of the attempts at forming new positions and framing various kinds of practice within the design field.

The bulk of this chapter will map out the formation of one of the major and increasingly important of these new positions; the identification of industrial design as a distinct field, activity and profession. The new generation of practitioners who identified themselves specifically as industrial designers and the central figures of the applied art community generally agreed that industrial design was emerging as an activity in its own right, requiring specific skills and concerns compared to other types of design practice. What they did not see eye to eye on was to what degree these realities would lead to a situation where industrial design had to be considered a separate field and profession or if it could be reconciled with the other types of design practice under the common heading of applied art. When studying the formation of the new position, we encounter new product types, new problems, new controversies, new actors, new agendas and new allies.

While the industrial design position was being formed, another new position took form in another other sector of the design field. Studio craftsmen also began to question the validity of the holistic and universalist approach to design so characteristic of the applied art movement. As industrial goods came to dominate in virtually every type of furnishings and utensils, the crafts began to navigate towards a new identity closer to that of fine art. This “artification” of arts and craft constitutes the formation of a position diametrically opposed to the new industrial design position, but they both shared the desire of *clearing the agenda* and thus contribute to *reconfiguring design cultures*.

The reconfigurations of the Norwegian design cultures in the 1960s also had an organisational aspect. In the last part of this chapter we shall see how new organisations were established and existing ones were reorganised, all with the aim of better coping with the changes and professionalisation taking place in the design field.

15.2 The ID-ing of I.D.

As we have seen, the term industrial design appeared for the first time in *Bonytt* in 1945.¹ A decade was to pass, however, before any notable tensions between an applied art (*brukskunst*) identity and an industrial design identity surfaced. The foundation of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in 1955 marked the acknowledgment of a distinct professional identity for industrial designers and a gradually emerging challenge to the holistic approach represented by the movement, term and profession associated with *applied art* (*brukskunst*). In the 1960s, this identification of industrial design was continued and intensified.

Arne Remlov was both pleased and enthused by the state of affairs in Norwegian design at the onset of the new decade, and optimistic of future developments and exports. He claimed to see great improvements in recent years, both in quality and quantity. The editor was especially thrilled to see that

today, a wide range of industrial companies within the industrial art branch... all trust in their designers... One constantly hears them say that export is not possible without good-design [sic] products.”²

Remlov thus entrusted future growth and expansion of Norwegian design to designers working in an industrial realm, acknowledging that the prominence of studio handicraft in the propaganda work of the 1950s would not do any longer: “the small workshops can not alone meet a foreign demand.”³ It is instructive to note, though, that he explicitly denominates “the industrial art branch” [“*den kunstindustrielle sektor*”], and not the manufactured goods industry as a whole. This reveals that Remlov was still very much conforming to the applied art ethos: what was interesting was product categories which had evident aesthetic functions, most notably objects for the home. But his attitude towards the industry and business world had changed according to what he saw as a change in attitude from the industry and business world towards design:

[D]uring the last 10-15 years the situation has changed so that the designer has become of vital importance, the designer has almost become in short supply because of the demand, whereas he before almost had to beg to be heard or employed.⁴

In this pleasant situation Remlov found a mark of respect and acknowledgment for the designers and their expertise: “A designer with insufficient or lacking knowledge of the

1. Arne Remlov, “Interiørarkitektens arbeide” in *Bo-nytt* Vol. 5, 1945, p 33 (“I Amerika er det blitt et fag av dette, *Industrial Design*.”)

2. Arne Remlov, “Ved inngangen til 1960-årene” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 186 (“en hel rekke industribedrifter innenfor den kunstindustrielle sektor... satser [i dag] alle på sine designere... Man hører stadig fra den kant at en eksport ikke er mulig uten good-design-produkter [sic].”)

3. *Ibid.* (“de små verksteder kan ikke alene møte en efterspørsel utenfra.”)

4. Arne Remlov, “Designerens ansvar” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 113 (“situasjonen i løpet av de siste 10-15 år har endret seg derhen at designeren har blitt av vesentlig viktighet, designeren er nærmest blitt mangelvare p.g.a. efterspørselen, mens han tidligere nærmest måtte tigge om å bli hørt eller benyttet.”)

production process of the industrial product is no good man for his employer or for his trade."⁵ His attention had certainly shifted slightly towards the industrial production of such objects and thus recognizing that the holistic, monochrome applied art idea which downplayed production systems had to be differentiated in accordance with the new social, cultural, industrial, economic and political circumstances of the 1960s.

The furniture industry was one of the branches that coped rather well with the transition to the new market situation brought on by the EFTA membership.⁶ In 1960 alone, its exports doubled in value compared with the previous year. According to Otto Malterud, director of the Norwegian Export Council (Norges Eksportråd), one of the main reasons for this success was to be found in a closer collaboration between the manufacturers and the designers—both parties had learned to know and utilize the expertise of each other. Industrial design, in the most poignant meaning of the term, was thus seen as the very key to export success.⁷ The 1960s fuelled the design community with great optimism in this respect. As the designer Roar Høyland put it: “Good industrial design can perhaps give us access to the world markets!”⁸

Here it is instructive to recall that just four years earlier, the very same Malterud more or less took it for granted that Norwegian industrial design (affordable, mass-produced products) could not compete on the international market due to insufficient production volumes and high production costs and therefore opted for promoting the more exclusive handicraft when lobbying for Norwegian exports.⁹ The change in attitude indicates that much had changed from 1957 to 1961—apart from the obvious impact of the emerging free trade, it seems as though industrial design had gained much higher recognition within the spheres of industry, commerce and administration. The transformation of the designer’s image from costly, eccentric “artist in the industry” to valued contributor to the product development process even bringing in an important and profitable competitive factor appeared to be under way.

Still, as Arne Remlov pointed out, despite the exported Norwegian furniture being products of an increasingly industrial nature, they would—like other Nordic furniture and French wine (Remlov’s parallel)—remain the privilege of a limited market of

5. *Ibid.* (“En designer med mangelfull eller ingen innsikt i industrivarens tilblivelsesprosess er ingen god mann for sin oppdragsgiver eller for sin yrkesgruppe.”)

6. This does not mean that the transition was painless and immaculate. Alf Midtbust—the director of the National Federation of Furniture Manufacturers (Møbelprodusentenes Landsforbund)—was an important actor in this process, constantly urging the industry both to rationalize production and to be ambitious in their export strategies. He also stressed the importance of thorough product development process based on mutual understanding and two-way communication between manufacturer and designer, something which made him a vital middleman and mediator between the industry and the design community. See e.g.: Alf Midtbust, “Fra Grukkedalen til Los Angeles—Eller hva nå i norsk møbelindustri” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 192-209. At the end of the decade, however, Midtbust was far less optimistic regarding the Norwegian furniture industry’s design strategies. He accused both manufacturers and designers for having renounced all characteristics of Norway or Scandinavia in their products and of unscrupulously imitating international fads in their new designs. Not only had Norwegian furniture design relapsed into utter formalism, but Midtbust ostentatiously proclaimed that “The cataclysm is upon us”: Alf Midtbust, “Syndefloden er over oss” in *nye bonytt* No. 6, 1969, p 31

7. Otto Chr. Malterud, “Norske møbler ut” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 41

8. Roar Høyland, “bo-nyttig” in *Bonytt* Vol 27, 1967, p 226 (“God industridesign kan kanskje gi oss adgang til verdensmarkedene!”)

9. O.E. [sic] Malterud, “Available for Export—Introduction” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 93

connoisseurs due to high prices and low production volumes. Recent attempts at altering this situation resulted, according to Remlov, in a loss of the characteristic qualities of Norwegian furniture.¹⁰ The social vocation of the early 1950s had thus seemingly evaporated completely—elite production was now considered the only salvation. Not everyone shared Remlov's view, though: For several of the new generation furniture designers entering the profession in the 1960s, the new market situation and the resulting higher demands on rational production represented new opportunities for achieving their ideals of designing unconventional and affordable furniture.¹¹

Nevertheless, Remlov was impressed by what he saw at the 1961 Norwegian furniture fair in Stavanger.¹² The event gave him—despite being a commercially motivated trade fair—“the impression of being a strictly censored design exhibition”. This was of course intended as a compliment to the furniture industry, and the *Bonytt* editor was especially pleased that “much of this industrially manufactured furniture showed a workmanship just as good as the finest handicraft.”¹³ [Figure 15-1] It thus seems as though, to Remlov, high quality industrial design represented the preferred compromise in the modern world of design and manufacture: He accepted that industrial production was inescapable and admitted that it could yield good results when only combined with the true virtues of craftsmanship and the design ideologies championed by the applied art community.

The interior architect and industrial designer Bjørn A. Larsen held a quite different view, claiming that “Norwegian furniture has become far too elegant, with unnecessary sculptural details and other gadgets.”¹⁴ This remark is symptomatic to the fact that Larsen as a member of ID-gruppen represented far more radical attitudes regarding the role and function of design than Remlov did. While Remlov wanted to think of Norwegian furniture like French wine, Larsen requested “something rougher and more family friendly”.¹⁵

The inaccuracy of Remlov's above equation between the industrial art sector and the manufactured goods industry was also mirrored in an all too easy analogy he made in connection with a presentation of British award-winning products: “*The Council of Industrial Design... is an institution that virtually corresponds to our own National Federation Norwegian Applied Art*”.¹⁶ Although Remlov did mention that the CoID—as opposed to the LNB—was established and fully funded by the government and the industry, he seemed to be under the impression that these fundamental organizational differences were mere details and as such did not have much bearing on the

10. Arne Remlov, “Norske møbler—Vår stilling nå og fremover” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 47-49

11. Svein Asbjørnsen interviewed in Eldar Høidal, “Kreativ, tolmodig og allsidig” in Kjetil Tandstad (ed.), *Årbok for Sykkylven 2004* (Sykkylven: Sykkylven sogeemnd, 2004) p 33-40

12. The first Norwegian Furniture Fair took place in 1960, also in Stavanger.

13. Arne Remlov, “Det holdt” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 163-164 (“inntrykk av å være en strengt juriert brukskunststilling... En mengde av disse industri-fremstilte møblene viste en utførelse fullt på høyde med det fineste håndverk.”)

14. Bjørn A. Larsen interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Hjemme hos Bjørn A. Larsen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 23, 1963, p 97 (“norske møbler er blitt altfor elegante, med unødvendige skulpturelle detaljer og andre påfunn.”)

15. *Ibid.* (“Noen røffere og mere familievennlige”)

16. Arne Remlov, “Prisbelønnet britisk brukskunst” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 136 (“*The Council of Industrial Design... er en institusjon som nærmest svarer til vårt eget Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst*”)



Figure 15–1: Two examples of products shown at the 1961 Norwegian Furniture Fair in Stavanger heralding the era of international competition and export drive in the Norwegian furniture industry. Top: Easy chair (teak structure and foam rubber upholstery) Stokke Fabrikker A/S, 1961. Designer: Gerhard Berg. In the *Bonytt* presentation, this chair was laudatorily described as “adhering to the “angular” furniture fashion now internationally accepted” and as “express[ing] the newest trend, adapted to what will perhaps be known as the architecture of the 1960’s.”^a Bottom: Seating system for public environments (nickel-plated steel frame and foam rubber upholstery) Dokka Møbler, 1961. Designer: Sven Ivar Dysthe. This product, intended for the contract business, exemplifies a market segment which would become increasingly important to the Norwegian furniture industry throughout the 1960s. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 21, 1961)

a. Arne Remlov, “Det holdt” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 169 and Alf Midtbust, “Fra Grukkedalen til Los Angeles—Eller hva nå i norsk møbelindustri” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 207

organisation's tasks, scopes and methods. He probably realised how wrong this analogy was when the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) was established in 1963—an organization which really *was* designed after the British counterpart. This was quite contrary to Remlov's wishes for a greater involvement (i.e. funding) from the government and the industry in the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst)—e.g. to enable the establishment of an annual Norwegian design award.¹⁷

One of those practitioners who most clearly had developed a professional identity as an industrial designer in the course of the 1950s was Birger Dahl. He was one of the founding members of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)), and one of the few who had a permanent position in an industrial company outside the traditional industrial art branch. After 15 years as an in-house designer of lighting fixtures at Sønnico, he had left his position to go free-lance in 1960 when the company discontinued their production as a result of harder competition from imported goods. He also taught morphology and design theory at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) from 1947.¹⁸ In a *Bonytt* interview, he displayed an attitude towards his designs which was quite typical of the industrial design ethos, but less so of the applied art ethos. When the journalist expressed concern that much of the modern, “effective and formally beautiful” lighting fixtures alluded to cafés and offices and thus appear deterring to ordinary consumers,¹⁹ Dahl answered that

Such an attitude is based on delusions that lamps should be ornamental. But a lamp must first and foremost be a light source, and as such it is better the more neutral and anonymous it is. I think the opinion is swaying in the right direction. It is not impossible that we in the future will have most of the home's general lighting installed when the house is built, as build-in lighting fixtures in the ceilings.²⁰

Like a true modernist, Dahl here argues for the lamp as pure utilitarian function, as a light-machine with minimal physical or aesthetic impact. The irony, of course, is that the much of the reason why Dahl's lamps had become so popular in the design community in the late 1950s was precisely their striking aesthetic impact. His curious prediction of the downlights of our day is as such more in line with his initial attitude of de-emphasizing the object (the lighting fixture).

17. *Ibid.*

18. Dahl was hired by Sønnico straight out of SHKS in 1945, after Sønnico's manager had contacted SHKS teacher Arne Korsmo for advice and been pointed in the direction of Dahl: Birger Dahl interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 18.02.1998 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]

19. Harriet Clayhills, “Vi og våre lamper—intervju med Birger Dahl” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 23 (“effektive og som form vakker”)

20. Birger Dahl interviewed in *Ibid.* (“En slik innstilling bunner i vrangforestillinger om at lamper skal være pyntegjenstander. Men en lampe skal først og fremst være en lyskilde, og som sådan er det bedre jo mer nøytral og anonym den er. Jeg tror oppfatningen holder på å svinge i riktig retning. Det er ikke umulig at vi i fremtiden får det meste av hjemmets almenbelysning ferdig-installert samtidig med at huset bygges, i form av innfellede lysramper i tak”)

Another mismatch between a prescriptive avant-garde modernist idiom and the *Bonytt* mediation of modern design ideology is found in a presentation of new tableware commissioned by Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS) for use aboard their new jet planes. SAS had been established in 1951 as joint venture between the Scandinavian social democratic governments, and thus carried strong symbolic meaning—both of the pan-Scandinavian spirit of the times, the trenchancy of the modern social democracy, and of modern living itself (jet planes!).²¹

The Swedish designer Sigurd Persson won the issued competition. He designed both cutlery, glasses, and service—all conforming to the quite severe restrictions in weight and dimensions posed on such products. *Bonytt*'s assistant editor Liv Schjødt hailed Persson's rationality and intellect in solving this task, and underlines his origin as a goldsmith as the explanation why all his work reflects "the ability to evaluate the idea strictly in relation to the use and the understanding of the material's inherent possibilities and limitations."²² Honesty towards the material is, as we know, one of the chief virtues of modern design.²³ SAS had, presumably for weight reasons, decided on the plastic Mepal as their material of choice for the service. In the SAS pan-Scandinavian spirit, the Persson-designed Mepal service was manufactured by the Norwegian company Norplasta [Figure 15-2].²⁴ Due to the impressive variety and flexibility of material properties, the plastics revolution was a great challenge to designers professing to the prescriptive avant-garde modernist idiom of honesty towards the material.²⁵ Persson's genius, then—according to Schjødt—was that

he has succeeded in refining this substance [plastic] by accepting it and giving it a form which brings the new objects to the level of the many other beautiful everyday goods—to turn them into applied art.²⁶

Whatever happened to the honesty towards the material? Schjødt here seems to imply that plastic materials have no laudable inherent qualities for the designer to reveal or enhance—rather, in designing a plastic product, the designer has to “accept” and “refine” an otherwise “unacceptable” and “brute” material by virtue of his artistic abilities. In retrospect, it is hard to see any principal difference between this way of making an inferior material look more distinguished through artistic refinement and e.g. the age-old tradition of painting wood or plaster to make it look like marble.

-
21. The new Scandinavian airline was a merger of three national airlines in Norway, Sweden and Denmark that already collaborated closely and had operated jointly on intercontinental flights under the name SAS since 1946: Francis Sejersted, *Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder—Norge og Sverige i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Pax, 2005) p 226-227
 22. Liv Schjødt, “Sigurd Persson tegner for SAS” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 129 (“evnen til å vurdere idéen strengt i forhold til bruken og forståelsen av materialets iboende muligheter og begrensning”)
 23. One of the earliest and most eloquent wordings of this virtue stems from the British architect Augustus W.N. Pugin. Pugin's four principles, first put forth in 1841, can—in a modernist reading—be expressed as follows: The honest expression of structure, the honest expression of function, the honest expression of materials, the honest expression of the spirit of the times. See e.g.: Brent C. Brolin, *Architectural Ornament—Banishment and Return* [Revised edition of *Flight of Fancy*, 1.ed. 1985] (London: W.W. Norton, 2000) p 106-124
 24. For a history of Norwegian plastic industry and design, see: Frode Weium (ed.) *Volund 1999-2000—Plast i det moderne Norge* (Oslo: Norsk teknisk museum, 2001) and Peter Butenschøn, Bente M. Dahl and Widar Halén (eds.), *...bare plast?!—Revolusjon i design* (Oslo: Messel, 1995)

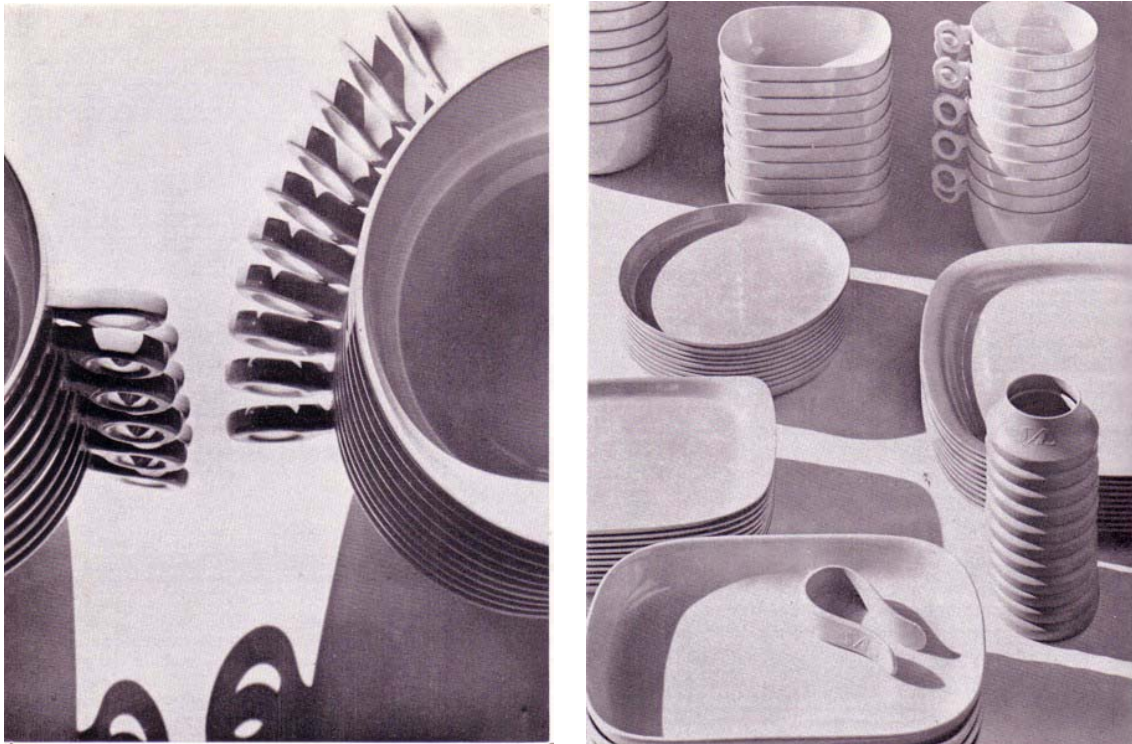


Figure 15–2: SAS airplane service (Mepal plastic) Norplasta, 1960. Designer: Sigurd Persson. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 20, 1960)

This example reveals an apparent discrepancy between design/practice and ideology/mediation. Schjødt’s interpretation of the project is permeated with applied art idioms such as the primacy of material refinement and artistic creativity. The project itself, with the collaboration between Persson, Norplasta and SAS, on the other hand, is a distinct example of industrial design—especially since the manufacturer was far from belonging to “the industrial art branch” as denominated by Remlov above.

Odd Brochmann expressed a similar attitude, trying to bridge the perceived gap between the technology/industry associated with modern life and the consumer society—such as television, jet planes and cars—on the one hand, and the traditional applied art ideals on the other. In his slightly misanthropic contemplation on the newly

25. As Andrea Branzi puts it: “Design treated the first generation of plastics as if their true identity was hidden within their intimate nature, to be discovered and revealed by the designer in much the same way as Michelangelo imagined that statues were concealed within the marble and were brought to light by the work of the sculptor. In the case of the new materials, the situation is reversed. It is the designer who, through his work, consciously bestows on them an identity that hitherto existed only as one out of many possibilities.”: Andrea Branzi, *Learning From Milan—Design and the Second Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988) p 68. This challenge has not lessened since, because, as Jeremy Myerson asks: “How can we be ‘true to materials’ when so many materials—alloys, hybrids, bondings—are mutants and not true to themselves[?]”: Jeremy Myerson, “Things to Enjoy: Reassessing Craft and Design Objects in an Age of Technology” in Tevfik Balcioglu (ed.), *The Role of Product Design in Post-Industrial Society* (Ankara & Fort Pitt: METU Faculty of Architecture Press & Kent Institute of Art & Design, 1998) p 66

26. Liv Schjødt, “Sigurd Persson tegner for SAS” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 129 (“har det lyktes ham å foredle dette stoffet ved å akseptere det og gi det en form som bringer det i klasse med de mange andre vakre hverdagsvarer—å gjøre dem til brukskunst.”)

“released” private car and how its profusion might steal time, resources and attention which the populace could (i.e. should) have allocated to the home, as well as the dangerously alluring design trends in the automobile industry, he concluded with a bleak prayer that “the gap between the sofa artists’ and the car artists’ ideals and endeavours not becomes too wide.”²⁷ Still, Brochmann saw greater threats than the car to the cultured and educated society of his dreams: At least, the car “symbolizes a drive, a goal and a greater activity than for instance the television set.”²⁸

Of course, not everyone in the design community shared Brochmann’s denunciative view of the television.²⁹ At the Applied Art Association in Oslo’s (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) 1961 autumnal exhibition, various designers had furnished and equipped a series of tv-rooms. The most radical proposition came from interior architect, designer and member of ID-gruppen Bjørn A. Larsen who in co-operation with the engineer Vebjørn Tandberg and his Tandberg Radiofabrikk—a Norwegian manufacturer of radios, tape recorders, loudspeakers, stereo systems and tv sets—presented a room with complete audiovisual equipment built into the walls.³⁰ But Larsen’s contribution was restricted to the design of the interior—all the equipment were existing models designed by the engineers and designers at Tandberg.³¹

Apropos the 1961 autumnal exhibition, and the audiovisual equipment’s status as props, it should be mentioned that the designer Roar Høyland was disappointed to see the absence of typical industrial products. In his view, industrial design (*industriell formgivning*) and applied art (*brukskunst*) were more or less synonymous terms and he disliked that the exhibition did not reflect this.³² Throughout the decade, Høyland became more and more concerned with industrial design, and even became president of ID-gruppen.³³ Speaking of Roar Høyland and industrial design, it is worth noting that both he and the art historian and curator Alf Bøe—who had an extraordinary interest in industrial design—joined the editorial committee of *Bonytt* from 1965.³⁴ Høyland and Bøe unquestionably represented more progressive attitudes towards design, but their entry did not seem to radically sway the magazine from an applied art focus to an industrial design focus.³⁵

Even Brochmann admitted that the proliferation of the private car brought about new activities, like e.g. increased holiday mobility. In the wake of these developments came new, affiliated products as well. For instance, the year after the “release” of the private car, two Norwegian caravans were on the market. Representing a new product type with no established manufacturer structure, it is interesting to note that these two Norwegian caravan models were produced by a carpentry shop (model *Hytta* produced by E.B. Bjølseths snekkerverksted) and by an airline’s metal workshop (model *Lillebror* produced by Widerøe’s flyveselskaps metallavdeling) [Figure 15-3].³⁶

27. Odd Brochmann, “Bil og bolig” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 135 (“ikke spranget mellom sofakunstneres og bilkunstneres idealer og bestrebelser blir altfor stort.”)

28. *Ibid.* (“symboliserer en oppdrift, et mål og en større aktivitet enn eksempelvis fjernsynsapparatet.”)

29. Already in 1957, *Bonytt* had discussed—in a strikingly balanced and reflective tone—the challenges which would be brought about by the proliferation of tv sets in terms of furnishing and interior design: Liv Schjødt, “Fjernsynet er over oss” in *Bonytt* Vol. 17, 1957, p 194-197

30. Harriet Clayhills, “Vi ser og hører” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, unpagged

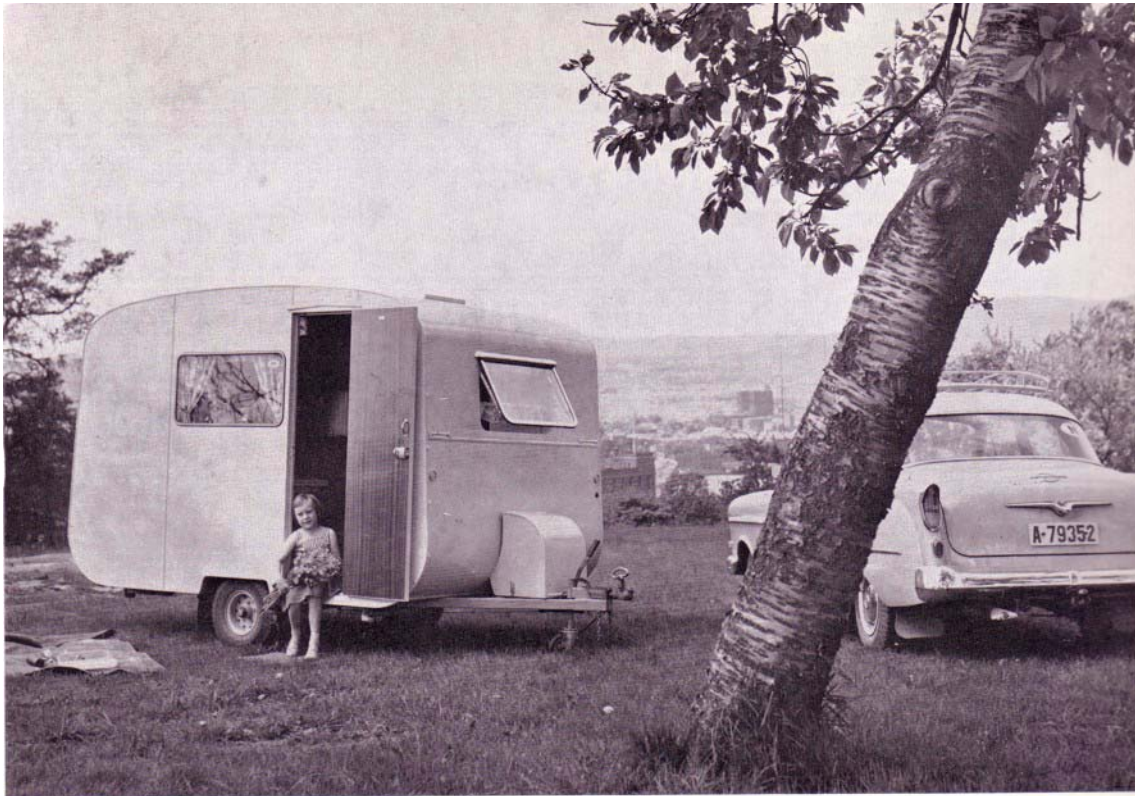


Figure 15–3: Caravan *Hytta* (wooden structure, aluminium plating) E.B. Bjølseths snekkerverksted, 1961. Design: Edvin Bjølseth. The first version was launched in 1954. Bjølseth soon gave up other carpentry tasks and built a new caravan factory in 1964. Bjølseth Caravan AS is today Norway’s only caravan manufacturer. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 21, 1961)

31. Tandberg had at least one trained designer on their staff: Asbjørn Ollestad, who had worked at Tandberg since 1955. He had studied at SHKS, been a furniture designer for eight years and was member of ID-gruppen. When the Tandberg tape recorder *Modell 6* (1960) and the portable transistor radio *TTR-1* (1963) were exhibited at the 1963 exhibition *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo), Ollestad was attributed with the design of these products. The design of the tape recorder earned him the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) for 1962. It is thus highly plausible that he was responsible for the design of most Tandberg products, including those shown in Bjørn A. Larsen’s interior as well, but I have not been able to confirm this. In Alf Bøe’s survey of the first editions of the Norwegian Design Award, however, the design of the above mentioned tape recorder is described as “teamwork design by the design department at Tandbergs [sic] Radiofabrikk A/S” with no mention of Ollestad or other individual designers. But Ollestad was design manager, and headed the company’s design department throughout the 1960s. Later on in the 1960s Tandberg hired another trained designer; Peter Opsvik—another SKHS graduate who later became an acclaimed furniture designer responsible for the design of e.g. the 1972 Stokke *Tripp Trapp* adjustable children’s chair and the 1979 Stokke *Balans Variable*—worked as an industrial designer at Tandberg from 1965 to 1970, where he designed e.g. the popular portable radios *TP 3-1* (1966) and *TP 3-3* (1967) with casings in ABS plastics available in many colours. Alf Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963) p 327, Alf Bøe, *Den norske Designpris de syv første år / The Norwegian Design Award its first seven years* (Oslo: Norsk Designcentrum, 1969) p 42 (“teamwork design ved designavdelingen for Tandbergs [sic] Radiofabrikk A/S”) and Helmer Dahl and Arnljot Strømme Svendsen, *Vebjørn Tandberg: triumf og tragedie* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 1995) p 126-127.

32. Roar Høyland, “Overhørt samtale av intern art” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 253

33. Roar Høyland in conversation with the author, 28.03.2007

Thus, many of the domains and tasks which were being established as belonging distinctively to the sphere of industrial design—such as plastic products, tv sets and cars—were problematised in the applied art community. Industries that had little or no contact with the traditional applied art community were met with a high degree of scepticism and desire for control and domestication of their products. An interesting strategy in the process of coping with the challenges posed by these domains of industrial design and which confronted both the qualifications, expertise and influence of the applied art community was to enrol actors who possessed the know-how and authority that the applied art community itself lacked.

In the case of electric appliances, for instance, the nation's most prestigious authorities of rationality were called on. Bodies like the Norwegian Electric Equipment Inspection (Norges Elektriske Materiellkontroll—NEMKO), the National Experimental Operations in Domestic Science (Statens forsøksvirksomhet i husstell),³⁷ the National Institute of Technology (Statens Teknologiske Institutt—STI) and the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høyskole—NTH) were all enrolled as suppliers of “truth”, “objectivity”, “science” and “reason” when the applied art community argued for what constituted good design of electric appliances.³⁸

This strategy must partially be understood in light of the great respect and authority engineers were met with both in society in general and in governmental circles. The design community shared this respect for science and technology in many respects, at least as long as the engineers did not trespass designer territory. As we shall see later, borderline cases could result in mixed, even heated emotions—but at times, the engineer-designer was accepted onto the turf of the applied art community, even put on a par with the designer. In a survey of kitchen utensils, Harriet Clayhills wrote that: “Engineers just as well as famous designers devote themselves eagerly to our pots, casseroles and pans. The results are excellent.”³⁹

The widening gap between the practices of handicraft and industrial design gave currency to a debate on the education of various types of designers. The Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) lobbied for a specialised university level industrial design education—although permanent results would be long in coming.⁴⁰ In the meantime, ID-gruppen member and later president Roar Høyland made an attempt at revising the existing educational program when he began teaching in the Metal Department at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) in 1968. He had received a grant from the Ministry of Industry (Industridepartementet) to visit the Royal College of Art in London to learn about how Misha Black and L. Bruce

34. *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, title page. Bøe curated the first Norwegian exhibition specifically devoted to industrial design in 1963, he was elected president of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) in 1965 and became director of the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) in 1968. Bøe's position on the editorial committee came with his office of president of the National Federation. In addition to Høyland and Bøe the architect Nils Slaatto also joined the editorial committee, while the grand old man Odd Brochmann left as he stepped down as president of the National Federation. Jens von der Lippe, who had been a member of the *Bonytt* editorial committee from the very beginning left his post the following years after 25 years of service: *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, title page

Archer thought about industrial design education. Upon his return, he even managed to procure extra funding for the Metal Department at SHKS with the ambition of developing courses oriented more specifically towards industrial design.⁴¹ Although this by no means turned his Department into a school of industrial design, it seems to have been a pragmatic and sensible adjustment. Both the majority of the members of ID-gruppen as well as almost every other designer or craftsman-designer in Norway at this time were trained at the SHKS (or a corresponding institution). This was perhaps also the single most important unifying trait in an otherwise fragmenting design community.

The suggested solutions to the issue of education were as diverse as the various subgroups and attitudes represented in the larger design community. The view generally expressed by ID-gruppen may be labelled separatistic. Voices from the traditional industrial art branch, such as the textile factory owner Axel Sellgren, requested a specialization within the existing applied art education so that those aspiring for work in the industry would be better prepared for such a task but without losing the material-based know-how.⁴²

Odd Brochmann, in the capacity of president (1961-1964) of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) argued for a intermediate solution. He wanted a broader and more thorough general education of designers in social and cultural matters and to de-emphasize the material-based division of branches of study.⁴³ In an open letter to the Minister of Education, he argued that an industrial design program should enjoy the same status as architecture, and thus have university level status, while the handicraft training should be more like an academy of fine arts. Brochmann made this argument because he here for the first time explicitly acknowledged the distinctiveness of industrial designers, who he singled out as “those applied artists [*brukskunstnere*] who it is now natural to distinguish as a separate

35. Not that they were merely marionettes: Roar Høyland’s passion for well-designed consumer products was promoted through a series of “infomercial” articles from 1967. See e.g.: Roar Høyland, “bo-nyttig” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 226-227 and Roar Høyland, “bo-nyttig” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 256-257. Also, the new members of the editorial committee were not afraid to criticise the established magazine policy and the attitudes of their boss. One example is when Alf Bøe butchered the interior design of the new Hotel Norge in Bergen (architect Halfdan Grieg’s building, however, was to Bøe’s liking). Bøe described the interior of this expensive and in structure and exterior highly modern building as a cacophony of pastiches, period furniture and conventional symbolism. In short; a disgrace. The intriguing fact is that the man responsible for the hotel’s interior design was none other than Arne Remlov. While Bøe—in what seems to be some sort of effort to moderate or divert his butchery—held the owners and employers liable for the deplorable result, Remlov defended both his solutions and his employers by asserting that modern design had not been able to develop formal solutions suitable for festive occasions acceptable to the public. To substantiate this assertion, Remlov pointed to the Astoria—Panton incident: In 1960, the Hotel Astoria in Trondheim—designed by Arne Vesterlid and Hermann Semmelmann in the early 1930s—had commissioned the radical but at the time relatively unknown Danish architect and designer Verner Panton to design the interiors of the hotel restaurant. The result was astounding in terms of visual effect, but since the guests did not take to it, the entire work was stripped after just some months and a more conventional interior installed. Remlov argued that such incidents naturally scared owners and employers and made them turn to those interior architects who accepted and mastered more conventional and traditional interior styles—like himself: Alf Bøe, “Hotellet til 40 millioner” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 64-68 and Arne Remlov, “Rom til fest—rom til gjest” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 69-71. Another member of the *Bonytt* editorial committee, Håkon Stenstadvold, also criticised Remlov’s interior design for Hotel Norge: Håkon Stenstadvold, “Stilfullt og stilløst—eftersom det funksjonelle krever det” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 60-63. For more on the Astoria—Panton incident, see: Thomas Flor, *Mørkets sans—Verner Pantons Astoria restaurant i Trondheim* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum, 2002)

category: the designers.”⁴⁴ But, as we can see, even though he now regarded industrial designers as a separate category with distinct qualifications, requirements, functions and responsibilities, he still considered them to belong to the broader field of applied art.

This curious insistence on the primacy and universality of the term applied art while at the same time bisecting it into the two sub-categories handicraft and industrial design was later repeated by Brochmann and also seconded by Arne Remlov, Liv Schjødt and Alf Bøe, thus substantiating the argument that this was the dominating view on design in the applied art community.⁴⁵ A Nordic design convention in Oslo in 1967 appointed a committee to try to resolve this increasingly bothersome terminological predicament. Its result was to avoid the term applied art altogether, but like Brochmann, Remlov, Schjødt and Bøe, the committee established the two distinct categories handicraft (*kunsthåndverk*) and industrial design as apt and convenient categories and defining terms, but wedged a third one—industrial art (*kunstindustri*)—in between the two. This latter was defined as “artefact production developed in protraction from the conventional workshop’s dimension, where the work of the hand and the machine is united in the product.”⁴⁶ Although these two (or three) terms/categories seemed to crystallize as a more adequate way of delimiting the design field, the Norwegian applied art community still insisted on using the term applied art as an umbrella, a collective term—something which is understandable given the fact the term was part and parcel of the movement’s unity and even incorporated in their organizations’ names.⁴⁷

From Denmark, where the craft-based applied art tradition was even deeper rooted than in Norway, director of the College of Applied Art and Craft (Kunsthavnværkerskolen) Viggo Sten Møller stated that Denmark did not have any industry to speak of, and thus did not need an education for industrial designers.⁴⁸ Representing a thoroughly universalist view in this matter, Liv Schjødt simply asked: “where are Norwegian architects in collaboration with the industry regarding our

36. Harriet Clayhills, “Vi bor på hjul” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, unpagged

37. The National Experimental Operations in Domestic Science (Statens forsøksvirksomhet i husstell) were later to develop into the National Institute for Consumer Research (Statens institutt for forbruksforskning—SIFO)

38. Harriet Clayhills, “Vi elektrifiserer husarbeidet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, unpagged

39. Harriet Clayhills, “Vi koker og steker” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, unpagged (“Ingeniører like så vel som navnkundige designere egner seg med iver til våre gryter, kasseroller og panner. Resultatene er utmerkede.”)

40. Already in 1956 ID-gruppen had established a committee with the aim of investigating the possibilities of a specialised industrial design education. The Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Education (Kirke og undervisningsdepartementet) appointed a committee in 1966, the first seminar for further education of designers was organised in 1973 and an experimental operation came about in 1979, but a permanent, fully-fledged, 4-year specialised industrial design program was up and running only from 1983: Jan Romsaas, *Thorbjørn Rygh og hans rolle i bakgrunnen for, og opprettelsen av Industridesignerutdannelsen i Oslo* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 67-121

41. Roar Høyland in conversation with the author, 28.03.2007

42. Axel Sellgren interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Ryer” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 162

43. Odd Brochmann interviewed in Arne Remlov, “Presidentuttalelser til Bonytt” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 162

44. Odd Brochmann, “Utdannelse av designere og kunsthåndverkere i Norge—Brev fra styret i Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst til Kirke- og Undervisningsministeren” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 72 (“de brukskunstnere som det nu er naturlig å skille ut som egen kategori: designerne.”)

45. Odd Brochmann, “Til brukskunstens fremme” in Liv Schjødt (ed.), *Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—Årbok 1964* (Oslo: Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1964) p 10, Liv Schjødt, “Industrial Design i norsk brukskunst” in Schjødt (ed.), *op.cit.* p 105, Arne Remlov and Liv Schjødt, “Kunsthåndverk—Industriell formgivning” in *Bonytt* Vol. 23, 1963, p 253 and Alf Bøe, “Fra broderi til gravemaskin” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 102-105

utensils?” recalling the Danish situation where architects designed everything “from the spoon to the city”.⁴⁹

Although it was hardly a response to Schjødt’s request—as it reflected not so much a practical involvement as a theoretical interest in the topic—*Byggekunst*, a magazine published by the National Association of Norwegian Architects (Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund—NAL) devoted a special issue to industrial design in 1961.⁵⁰ This *Byggekunst* issue started out with an article by the art historian Stephan Tschudi-Madsen entitled “Glimpses from the history of industrial design” (“Glimt fra den industrielle formgivings historie”). Here, the author traced the contemporary idea of industrial design back into history, ending up with the British 19th century theoretician Henry Cole as “the first industrial designer”. Tschudi-Madsen claimed to reveal a “line of logic... in 19th century design”, identifying a series of products displaying “unpretentious form, clear and logical and at the same time refined in its simplicity.”⁵¹ As such, this is a typical example of genealogic, projecting and deterministic history showing and explaining the unavoidable victory of modernism in the persistent tradition of Nikolaus Pevsner and Sigfried Giedeon.⁵² Even “misdirections” or “interludes” like the Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau, Art Deco and Streamlining were in Tschudi-Madsen’s account assigned roles according to the “necessary” development of “true” modern design.⁵³ However, given the context and plausible motivation—creating a historical backdrop for a topic of which the public had limited knowledge—it might have provoked the desired effect.

The main feature of the *Byggekunst* special issue on industrial design was written by the president and co-founder of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)), Thorbjørn Rygh, and the article could almost be regarded a somewhat delayed manifesto of ID-gruppen. Rygh started out by

46. Jørgen Skaare, “Kunsthåndverk og industri” in Peter Anker, *et al.*, *Norsk brukskunst* (Oslo: Dansk-norsk fond, 1969) p 70 (“gjenstandsproduksjon sprunget frem i forlengelsen av det konvensjonelle verksteds dimensjon, der håndens og maskinens arbeide er forenet i produktet.”)

47. In addition to the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), the local chapters Bergen Applied Art Association (Bergen Brukskunstforening) and Trondheim Applied Art Association (Trondheim Brukskunstforening) still existed (the Oslo chapter closed in 1965), and a Friends of the Applied Art (Brukskunstens Venner) was founded as late as 1967.

48. Viggo Sten Møller, “Fremtidens brukskunstnere” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 65

49. Liv Schjødt, “Glass til bruk” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 35 (“hvor er norske arkitekter i samarbeide med industrien om våre bruksting?”) The slogan “from the spoon to the city” (“dal cucchiaio alla città”) stems from a speech made by the Italian architect Ernesto N. Rogers at a conference in Zürich in 1946 and published in *Domus* No. 215, November 1946: Alfonso Grassi and Anty Pansera, *L’Italia del design—trent’anni di dibattito* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1986) p 16

50. Though one of the articles did echo Schjødt’s request: “It is strange that one among architects have not found fertile soil for industrial design, especially when recalling the traditions from Bauhaus Dessau”: Thorbjørn Rygh, “Industrial Design—i Norge” in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p 37 (“Det er merkelig at man ikke blandt arkitektene har funnet grobunn for industrial design, især når man tenker på tradisjonene fra Bauhaus Dessau.”) Apropos Schjødt’s reference to the Danish architects’ involvement with industrial design it is also worth mentioning that the issue also contained an article on Arne Jacobsen and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*-character of his recent SAS Royal Hotel in Copenhagen: Christian Enevoldsen, “Arne Jacobsen—først og fremmest arkitekt” in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p 47-56. For more on this latter topic, see: Anders V. Munch, “Throughout any Scale” in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, 2004, p 22-47 (esp. 29-35), Michael Sheridan, *Room 606—The SAS House and the Work of Arne Jacobsen* (London: Phaidon, 2003) and Carsten Thau and Kjeld Vindum, *Arne Jacobsen* (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 2001) p 426-442.

enrolling international support for his cause by referring to the Association's membership in the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) and their definition of an industrial designer:⁵⁴

An industrial designer is one who by education, technical and manual, through experience and visual sensitivity, has qualified for deciding materials, constructions, mechanics, form, colour, surface treatment and decor of products being manufactured industrially in large numbers. An industrial designer may be engaged in all or just some of these aspects of an industrially manufactured product.—An industrial designer will also work on packaging, advertisement, exhibition and marketing when the solving of such problems require visual assessment and technical knowledge and experience.—A designer for industry whose work is partially based on handicraft is designated industrial designer when products by his designs or models are intended for sale and manufactured in series, and are not made by the artist personally.⁵⁵

This definition is very wide, focusing more on creating a comprehensive scope for the profession than on limitations regarding manufacturing methods. Taken to extremes, it may thus include graphic designers designing decor for mass-produced products as well as workshop ceramists—as long as they only made models and left the execution/proliferation to other craftsmen.⁵⁶ More surprising, however, is the use of the term “artist” as a possible synonym for industrial designer. But the core issue for Rygh and ID-gruppen was the specific design requirements posed by mass-production, not fighting the artistic understanding of industrial design—which they to some degree seconded. When discussing the contents of a specialized industrial design education, for instance, Rygh stated that

There seems to be a general understanding that a broader introduction to general culture is more important to emphasize than technical training. The designer should be more of a sensitively creative artist than engineer.⁵⁷

-
51. Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, “Glimt fra den industrielle formgivings historie” in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p 29-35 (“den første “industrial designer”... logiske linje... i 1800-årenes design... upretensiøs form, klar og logisk og samtidig raffinert i sin enkelhet.”)
 52. Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design—From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (2. ed.) (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949) and Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The growth of a new tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford University Press, 1949). For a historiographic analysis of Pevsner's work, see: Peter Draper (ed.), *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). For a critique of this tradition in design history, architectural history and in the history of ideas respectively, see: Clive Dilnot, “The State of Design History, Part II” in Victor Margolin (ed.), *Design Discourse: History, theory, criticism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989) p 233-250, Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999) and Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas” in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988) p 29-67.
 53. It should be mentioned here that Tschudi-Madsen had great respect and admiration for many of the phenomenons which he in the *Byggekunst* article chiefly described as “misdirections” or “interludes”, such as the Arts and Crafts Movement and Art Nouveau. See e.g.: Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, “Dragestilen: honnør til en hånet stil” in *Årbok—Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum 1949/1950* (Bergen: Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1950) p 19-59
 54. The ICSID affiliation was further stressed in Karl-Edvard Korseth, “Internasjonal Design” in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p Tillegget-6

Still, the most crucial expertise needed in an industrial designer, according to Rygh, was the ability to cope with design for mass-production, and a specialized industrial design education would be essential in creating a sufficiently large pool of competence:⁵⁸ Failing to do so would “result in a very serious setback for a large proportion of the manufactured goods industry.” But, Rygh continued, “The designer alone can not solve the problems. It also requires an alert business management.” And to enrol business managements, the designers had to speak the only language understood in commercial industry: “It is sales statistics that make the producers react.”⁵⁹

Seizing the opportunity presented by this new context and partially different audience, Rygh presented the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) as a result of a growing dissatisfaction and frustration by the way the broader applied art movement related to industrial design. This dissociation with the applied art movement seems to have been taken for granted by central actors in the architectural community as well, because the editorial of the *Byggekunst* special issue bluntly asserted that “we know that he [the industrial designer]... in principle does not perceive himself as an applied artist [*brukskunstner*].”⁶⁰ The official policy of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) was a universalist, almost monochrome one—manufacturing methods were not seen as decisive or discriminating in this respect.

As we have seen here, Rygh was of the opinion that designing for mass-production posed specific requirements, but accused the applied art movement of not understanding this, or simply not being willing or able to cope with these challenges. Why did they ignore product categories which clearly could belong to the designer’s sphere, such as vacuum cleaners, stoves, telephones, cameras, typewriters, cash registers, refrigerators, tools, fittings, boats, planes, locomotives, trams, cars and mopeds?⁶¹ The applied art movement had, in Rygh’s view, thus lost trace of any social vocation and

55. Thorbjørn Rygh, “Industrial Design—i Norge” in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p 36 (“En industrial designer er en som har kvalifisert seg ved utdannelse, teknisk og manuelt, gjennom erfaring og visuell følsomhet, til å bestemme materialer, konstruksjoner, mekanikk, form, farge, overflatebehandling og dekor av produkter som blir produsert industrielt i mange eksemplarer. En industrial designer kan være beskjeftiget med alle eller bare enkelte av disse sider av et produkt fremstilt industrielt.—En industrial designer vil også arbeide med pakninger, avertering, utstilling og markedsføring når løsning av slike oppgaver krever visuell vurdering og teknisk kunnskap og erfaring.—En tegner for industri hvis arbeid delvis er basert på håndverk, benevnes industrial designer når produkter etter hans tegninger eller modeller er beregnet for salg og fremstilles i serier, og ikke er laget av kunstneren personlig.”)

56. Several graphic designers were accepted as members of ID-gruppen in the 1960s, such as Bruno Oldani and Ruedi a Porta, despite the fact that graphic designers already had their own trade union, the Draughtsmen’s Union (Yrkesteegnernes forening) founded in 1937. This policy was, however, frowned upon by some members—Bjørn A. Larsen, for instance, was worried about the growing number of graphic designers in the group: Trygve Ask, *God Norsk Design—Konstitueringen av industridesign som profesjon i Norge* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitekturhøgskolen i Oslo, 2004) p 204. ID-gruppen also had members who also designed for entirely craft-based production. One example may be Hermann Bongard, who did many projects where the manufacturing was far from industrial, such as a series of wicker furniture manufactured by the basket maker Bror Paulsen at the PLUS colony in Fredrikstad: N.N.: “Design revy” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 225

57. Rygh, *op.cit.* (“Det ser ut til å være enighet om at større bredde i almenkulturell innføring er viktigere å legge hovedvekten på enn teknisk opplæring. Designeren skal være mer av en følsomt skapende kunstner enn en ingeniør.”)

58. For the sake of scope, I will not pursue ID-gruppen and Rygh’s lobbying for an industrial design education further. For more on this topic, see: Romsaas, *op.cit.*

responsibility.⁶² On some points, however, his accusations seem a bit exaggerated. There are some very interesting examples indicating that some actors firmly rooted in the established applied art community had tried to face the challenges posed by some of the product categories Rygh claimed had been ignored.⁶³ Although Rygh and most of his colleagues in ID-gruppen appreciated their own ties to the applied art movement and sympathized with the cause of aesthetic education of the populace, he claimed that the applied art movement was barking up the wrong tree as the focus turned increasingly towards elitist industrial art production and handicraft:

We must be aware that most people are aesthetic ignoramuses for whom applied art does not mean anything. Here, the cheaper mass-produced commodities can play a much bigger role as our time's greatest contribution to art culture.⁶⁴

As we can clearly see, Rygh had no intention of putting an end to the cultural elitism so highly cultivated in the applied art movement. Their ever increasing material elitism, on the other hand, he discredited completely—but simply because it was ineffective. Still, Rygh was not devoid of democratic ideals—it was just that in the modern consumer society of mass-production and free trade it was only industrial design and a focus on mass-produced affordable products that could truly fulfil the old Paulssonian dream of *more beautiful everyday goods* (*vackrare vardagsvara*). The altruistic aspect of this argument was perhaps better expressed by another designer and ID-gruppen member, Karl-Edvard Korseth, who requested “a balance between the industry’s self-interest and social responsibility.”⁶⁵

While Thorbjørn Rygh’s arguments for an improved position for his trade were mainly of a political—and partly cultural—nature, his fellow designer and ID-gruppen member Arnulf Bjørshol took a more subtle, yet pragmatic approach. Bjørshol’s article in the *Byggekunst* special issue on industrial design did not attack or accuse anyone or anything—it was inviting rather than exhortative in form. Presenting a number of product development methods and the designer’s contribution to the processes, Bjørshol clearly aimed at the industry and its managers asking them to see the rational advantages of hiring a trained industrial designer.⁶⁶ What is more interesting, though, is his closing remark on industrial design and corporate identity:

It is the products [of original design] that create the company’s face. A company that

59. Rygh, *op.cit.* p 37 (“bety et meget alvorlig tilbakeslag for en stor del av ferdigvareindustrien... Designeren alene kan ikke løse problemene. Det forutsettes også en våken bedriftsledelse... Det er salgsstatistikk som får produsentene til å reagere.”)

60. N.N., “Under en knagg” (editorial) in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p Tillegget-5 (“Vi vet at han... prinsipielt ikke oppfatter seg som brukskunstner”)

61. Rygh, *op.cit.*

62. At the other end of the decade, in 1969, the architect Bjørn Hustveit felt compelled to caution against a similar development in industrial design as well: “[T]he applied art movement... was slowly consumed by the commercial community and Scandinavian applied art is therefore not social. It has become exclusive handicraft. And the same development has started in industrial design!”: Bjørn Hustveit, “Merke for god design?” in *nye bonytt* No. 5, 1969, p 3 (“[B]rukskunstbevegelsen... ble langsomt fortært av forretningsstanden og derfor er ikke skandinavisk brukskunst sosial. Det er blitt et eksklusivt kunsthåndverk. Og den samme utvikling har startet innen industri design[sic]!”)

already has a face—though the features are rather blurred—must have designers and engineers who can investigate the company’s characteristics, and also give this face an independent life.⁶⁷

While many actors—both designers and theoretician—during the preceding decade had tried to appeal to the industry and business managers by arguing that good design was

63. One good example is the architect, painter, designer and professor of architecture Arne E. Holm, who designed a telephone for A/S Elektrisk Bureau in 1953. According to the Norwegian historian Terje Ellefsen, this was the world’s first telephone in thermoplastic, produced in 543.735 copies until 1967. (The first all-thermoplastic telephone set, that is—The US Western Electric Model 302 designed by Henry Dreyfuss Associates in 1937 was changed from a zinc base shell to a thermoplastic base shell in 1941, but this phone featured a bakelite handset.) In sources not closely affiliated with the traditional design community, the design of this telephone is often attributed to Johan Christian Bjercknes, an engineer and design manager at A/S Elektrisk Bureau. This discrepancy may be interpreted as an indication that Arne E. Holm’s role was very much that of an external consultant, much like when the painter Jean Heiberg back in 1932 contributed to the final exterior design of A/S Elektrisk Bureau’s pioneering bakelite telephone which also was based on a concept design by Bjercknes. A 1989 article in the newsletter of the Telecommunications Authority (Televerket), Holm’s contribution is “discovered” in a letter from Holm to Bjercknes’ sons following the engineer’s death in 1983. Here, Holm celebrated their collaboration and praised Bjercknes for having “an understanding of formal problems that was impressive.” Correspondingly, the Norwegian design historian Fredrik Wildhagen did not mention Bjercknes when he highlighted the EB bakelite phone in his contribution the most comprehensive survey of international industrial design history hitherto published; the three-volume *History of Industrial Design* edited by Carlo Pirovano—although he attributed the design to both Bjercknes and Heiberg in his book on Norwegian design. Alf Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963) p 114, Terje Ellefsen, Anne Solberg and Cato Normann, *Telephones—telephones in Norway 1880-2000* (Oslo: Norwegian Telecom Museum, 2000) p 19, 72-73 & 64-65 (This publication mentions Heiberg’s contribution to the 1932 bakelite phone as a “final touch” to Bjercknes’ design, but makes no mention of Holm’s contribution to the 1953 thermoplastic phone), Tor Edvin Dahl, Terje Ellefsen and Anne Solberg, *Hallo?!—Norges telefonhistorie* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1993) p 116, Letter from Arne E. Holm quoted in N.N., “Johan Chr. Bjercknes: 1932-modellens far” in *Verk & virke*, No. 3, 1989, p 10 (“en forståelse for formproblem som var imponerende.”), Fredrik Wildhagen, “The Scandinavian Countries: Design for the Welfare Society” in Carlo Pirovano (ed. in chief), *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 3: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design* (Milano: Electa, 1990) p 150-151, Fredrik Wildhagen, *Norge i Form—Kunsthåndverk og design under industrikulturen* (Oslo: J.M. Stenersen, 1988) p 107-109. The goldsmith Oskar Sørensen’s rather abrupt career move is also fascinating in this respect—in 1957 he gave up his position at the silversmith company J. Tostrup to become a design consultant for A/S Nordisk Aluminiumsindustri, thus shifting focus from exclusive luxury handicraft items to highly mundane mass-produced everyday goods: kitchen utensils in aluminium (he was no novice in this business, though—he had designed casseroles for Høyang already before WW II). Sørensen had been a student of Jacob Prytz, and both lectured at and later headed the department of goldsmithery at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS), and must thus be said to be firmly rooted in the established applied art community. Another goldsmith, Harry Sørby—also a former Prytz student, had showed similar interest in industrial design when he in 1946 designed kitchen scales for Aanonsen Fabrikker—a product which was a far cry from the luxury commodities he normally designed for the silversmith company David-Andersen. As an anecdote to this latter project, it might be mentioned that as early as 1935 the architect Arne Korsmo had designed another weighing instrument—a pendulum-type scale for commercial use manufactured by Viig & Vraalsen & A.P. Foss. His task seems to have been to redesign an existing model, and together with a project for an electric cooker for A/S Per Foss the same year, is was the only industrial design Korsmo did in the interwar years. It was not just the applied art community that showed an interest in industrial design—even a few representatives from the sphere of fine art did: “Real” artists taking on industrial design commissions is a phenomenon often connected with late 19th and early 20th century, but there are examples of this from the 1950s and 1960s as well. For instance the Brødrene Øyo stainless steel cutleries *Grace* and *Gilde* designed by the painter Roy Blohm, who had studied under Jean Heiberg at the National Academy of Art (Statens kunstakademi). Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, et al. (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 4 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1986) p 150-151 & 169-170, Jan-Lauritz Opstad, *David-Andersen: 100 år i norsk gullsmedkunst—gullsmedkunst og stilhistorie 1876-1976* (Oslo: David-Andersen & Kunstindustrimuseet, 1976), Bøe, *op.cit.* p 217-227 and Astrid Skjerven, “Ny helhet” in Jon Brønne, Eirik T. Bøe and Astrid Skjerven, *Arne Korsmo—Arkitektur og design* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2004) p 34-36 & 225

sales promoting, Bjørshol here went beyond stressing the advantages of successful design of single products to advocating a overall design strategy. Given the target group, this angle may very well have been the more clever—it seems plausible that the majority of business managers could more easily relate to and be swayed by arguments concerning corporate identity than product design.

As the 1960s came of age, there came certain indications that the applied art community, especially the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), did try to respond to the challenges from the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) as formulated by Thorbjørn Rygh. Perhaps the most concrete example of this was that when art historian and senior curator at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) Alf Bøe took the initiative to put on the first grand exhibition devoted entirely to industrial design, the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) joined in alongside the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) and their new supporters, the Norwegian Export Council (Norges Eksportråd) and the Federation of Norwegian Industries (Norges Industriforbund), as organizers of the exhibition.⁶⁸

Although the venue—the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo)—gave the exhibition a decidedly artistic allure in keeping with the traditions of the applied art community, the selection of exhibited objects conceded more to ID-gruppen. Another factor indicating a shift of balance from the art sphere towards the world of industry and commerce is that when inviting a prominence to write the preface to the exhibition catalogue, the Minister of Industry was chosen over e.g. the Minister of Cultural Affairs.⁶⁹ But the intermediate nature of the project was underlined in the Minister of Industry Trygve Lie's introduction: "A high level of design in mass-

64. Rygh, *op.cit.* ("Vi må også være klar over at de fleste mennesker er estetiske ignoranter, for hvem brukskunst ikke betyr noe. De billigere masseproduserte forbruksvarer kan spille en langt større rolle her som vår tids største bidrag til kunstkulturen.")

65. Karl-Edvard Korseth, "Internasjonal Design" in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p. Tillegget-6 ("en balanse mellom industriens egen-interesse [sic] og sosiale ansvar.")

66. Arnulf Bjørshol, "Om modeller—eller samarbeid i forhold 1:1" in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p. 41-46

67. *Ibid.* p. 46 ("Det er de egne produkter som skaper bedriftens ansikt. En bedrift som først har et ansikt—selv om trekkene er nokså utvisket—må ha designere og konstruktører som kan utdype bedriftens spesielle karaktertrekk, og også gi dette ansikt et selvstendig liv.")

68. Arne Remlov, "Industriell formgivning ID" in *Bonytt* Vol. 23, 1963, p. 282. The very first exhibition where ID-gruppen was involved and industrial design was presented to the public was the 1955 annual autumnal Applied Art Association in Oslo exhibition in the Artists' Exhibition Building (Kustnernes hus) where ID-gruppen had been given their own little section: Viggo Sten Møller, "En norsk utstilling sett med danske øyne" in *Bonytt* Vol. 15, 1955, p. 214-217. A situation which made Remlov, *Bonytt* and probably the rest of the applied art movement extra friendly disposed toward the *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* exhibition was that in 1963, the annual autumnal Applied Art Association in Oslo exhibition failed to appear for the first time since 1946: Remlov, *op.cit.*

69. The problems of how and where to situate design were by no means uniquely Norwegian. For instance, the British design historian Paddy Maguire has shown how in postwar Britain different parties with different interests could struggle "over whether design... should be considered a cultural or a trade concern.": Paddy Maguire, "Designs on Reconstruction: British Business, Market Structures and the Role of Design in Post-War Recovery" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1991 p. 21

produced industrial goods is the sine qua non for breadth and diversity in the material aspects of our culture.”⁷⁰

The selection of objects for the exhibition included untraditional products like TV sets, tape recorders, transistor radios, an electric adding machine, an inter-com, a telephone, a megaphone, echo sounders, an engine-room telegraph, a fuse switch, electric plugs and switches, freezers, electric cookers, stoves, radiators, heating panels, window hinges and locks, an electric balance saw, handsaws, a motorized lawn mower, a wheelbarrow, a foldable garden scythe, a hay loader, a pushcart, a pram, cross-country skis with sticks and bindings, a sliding board, fishing rods, luggage, a life vest, boats, rowlocks, fenders, fish crates, jerry cans, pails, a chemical lavatory, a weighing-machine, kitchen scales, product packaging, a gas mask, a gantry crane, a respirator, a welding transformer, a gang slitting machine and a paint scraper.⁷¹

The design of many of these products was attributed to persons who never before—or after—had been part of the organized design community, such as Egil Rein, Jørgen Skogheim, Frithjof Edwardsen, Ingar Grønneberg, Yngvar Wessel, Magne Thomstad, Olav Mogård, Trygve Brune, Thor Jacobsen, Hans Bratten, Sverre Bjørhuus, Herman Semmelmann, Johan Geelmuyden, Einar Strandengen, Arne Gjerde, Gerhard Kristiansen, Knut Eng, Atle Torkildsen, Asbjørn Hørgård, Einar Bergsland, Asbjørn Evensen, Arnulf Steinsland, Hans Andreassen, Jan Bergh Eriksen and Arvid Øberg.⁷² Although they had designed industrial products, most of these probably did not think of themselves as industrial designers—they had various professional backgrounds: entrepreneurs, managers, technicians, engineers, draughtsmen, etc. What they had in common and which set them apart from the those who called themselves designers was that they had *not* studied at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) and had thus not been socialized into the organized design community.⁷³

Enrolling all these persons, products—and the corresponding manufacturers—for the cause of industrial design must be considered a highly strategic effort both in the expansion of the design community’s actor network and in the propaganda work. It is important to remember, though, that these newly recruited actors remained rather passive contributors to the design community. Nor did their products make up the entire exhibition—at least two thirds of the 313 objects could easily have been shown at a traditional applied art exhibition divided into the usual categories such as furniture, textile, glass, ceramics, etc.⁷⁴

In this connection it is interesting to note that the three Figgjo products that were selected for the exhibition—a tea set, a tv service and a dish—must be regarded as niche products rather than representing the company’s bread-and-butter production. All three were designed by Hermann Bongard—who also designed the exhibition catalogue.⁷⁵ Why the jury did not select any products designed by Figgjo’s in-house designers Ragnar Grimsrud and Jørg Løve Nielsen is impossible to say with any certainty, but it should not

70. Trygve Lie, Preface to Bøe, *op.cit.* p 7

71. Bøe, *op.cit.* p 50-313

72. *Ibid.*

uncritically be put down to superior design competencies by Bongard. It should be remembered here that Bongard, as opposed to Grimsrud and Løve Nielsen, was a member of ID-gruppen and an insider of the wider Oslo-entered design elite and thus well known by the curators and organizers.

The selection of products for the exhibition was made by a jury consisting of Bøe (appointed by the museum), senior lecturer, interior architect and industrial designer (member of ID-gruppen) Birger Dahl (appointed by the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art) and interior architect and industrial designer (member of ID-gruppen) Bjørn A. Larsen (appointed by ID-gruppen).⁷⁶ The engineer Lyder Kahrs (appointed by the Central Institute for Industrial Research (Sentralinstituttet for Industriell Forskning)) functioned as the jury's technical consultant.⁷⁷ What exactly the technical consultant's job was is hard to say, because Bøe later wrote that none of the products were subjected to any practical or technical tests as part of the assessment, and that

The jury evaluated form, primarily in relation to choice of materials, production processes, functional demands and maintenance... and... a unitary solution and general character of seamliness where the aesthetics was brought into play as an integrated element in the overall assessment.⁷⁸

How the form's relation to functional demands and maintenance could be evaluated without performing any kind of product testing or analysis seems strange, and it is tempting to suggest that the jury's decisions were largely based on the same criteria and evaluation methods as the more traditional applied art exhibitions.⁷⁹ There is thus reason to believe that Bøe in the above quote understated the jury's emphasis on aesthetic qualities. The significance of this process is augmented by the fact that Bøe claims that the exhibition's jury selection more or less functioned as a trial run for the evaluation

73. Allowedly Egil Rein was a member of ID-gruppen. But he was a mechanical engineer by training and employed as construction manager at Siemens Norge A/S. Rein's membership in ID-gruppen most probably resulted from an invitation by the designer and ID-gruppen member Birger Dahl, who collaborated closely with Rein on his design commissions for Siemens. A couple of tape recorders attributed to Rein were shown at the exhibition, and one of them—a portable version called *Model 10*—earned him the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) for 1962. But, like the other engineers/technicians who received the Norwegian Design Award in the 1960s—such as e.g. Olav Njå (agricultural equipment for Kverneland, 1964 and 1966—Njå was not a member of ID-gruppen at the time of the exhibition, but became a member after receiving the design award), Jørgen Skogheim (tv set *Siera* for Norsk Philips A/S, 1962) and Trygve Brune (lighting fixture *Asymetria GA-Y* for Glamox, 1962)—Rein kept a low profile in the design community, despite his membership in ID-gruppen. Of the designers I have mentioned, it was only Hermann Semmelmann who had a formal education more in line with the traditions in the applied art community, as he was an architect. He also served for a brief period from 1948 as board member of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst). But, because his design of a radiator for Nobø constituted not much more than an anecdote or sideline to his architectural practice and his position as Head of Trondheim Municipal Building Standard Supervision (bygningssjef i Trondheim), I still find it opportune to list him among the other “non-SHKS” designers: *Ibid.* p 107-108, 159-160 & 323-329, Alf Bøe, *Den norske Designpris de syv første år / The Norwegian Design Award its first seven years* (Oslo: Norsk Designcentrum, 1969) p 42, *Bonytt*, No. 7-8, 1948, p v, Arne Gunnarsjaa, *Arkitekturleksikon* (Oslo: Abstrakt, 1999) p 687-688, Helge Solberg, *et al.* (eds.), *Arkitektur i 1000 år—Arkitekturguide for Trondheim* (Trondheim: Trondhjems Arkitektforening, 1999) p 156 and Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 3 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1986) p 524-525

74. Alf Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963) p 50-313

75. *Ibid.* p 241, 244-245 & 4

criteria for good design developed by the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) from 1965.⁸⁰

A similar exhibition was put on in the West Norway Museum of Decorative Art (Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum) in Bergen in 1966. It was organized by the museum and its friends association in collaboration with the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), supported by the Norwegian Design Centre. Compared with the Oslo event three years earlier, this exhibition was considerably smaller—96 exhibited objects versus 313 in Oslo—and its profile seems to have been more in line with the traditional applied art exhibitions. The title alone reveals this: *Norwegian Applied Art 1966 (Norsk brukskunst 1966)* with the subheading *Ceramics, Textile, Silver, Glass, Furniture, Porcelain, Industrial Design (keramikk, tekstil, sølv, glass, møbler, porselen, industrial design)*.⁸¹ Here, industrial design seems to have been considered more or less like an appendix to the traditional applied art categorized by material—an accumulation account in which to deposit these new and somewhat alien products which did not fit in the conventional classification structure. As the museum's new director, Peter Anker, put it:

[W]hen *industrial design* now enters the West Norway Museum of Decorative Art with a separate section at the applied art exhibition in the year 1966, it is... somewhat of a milestone,.. because it marks today's enlargement of the term applied art⁸²

A good indication as to how awkward this appendant categorization became, is that the Figgjo 3500 hotel china service—a thoroughly industrial product—was placed under the heading “Porcelain” next to handicraft products such as e.g. Leif Helge Enger's chamotte stoneware executed as studio work at Porsgrund, and not under “Industrial Design”.⁸³ Silver cutlery from three different silversmith companies—David-Andersen, Theodor Olsens Eftf. and J. Tostrup—on the other hand, were categorized as “Industrial Design”

76. It is worth noting here, that the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art chose to appoint the ID-gruppen member Dahl rather than a more typical applied artist (brukskunstner). Hence, the National Federation must have made the appointment solely on professional grounds, not letting any potential political motivations to the fore.

77. Bøe, *op.cit.* p 48

78. Alf Bøe, “Kunstindustri og industridesign etter 1940” in Knut Berg, Peter Anker, Per Palme and Stephan Tschudi-Madsen (eds.), *Norges kunsthistorie* Vol. 7 (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1983) p 451 (“Juryn vurderte form, først og fremst i forhold til materialvalg, produksjonsprosesser, funksjonskrav og vedlikehold... og... en helhetlig løsning og alminnelig preg av skikkelighet der det estetiske spilte inn som et integrert element i helhetsvurderingen.”)

79. This lack of performance testing in the evaluation of “good design” is found elsewhere as well: In Britain, the winners of the 1959 Design Centre Awards were selected from reviewing the *photographs* of the products in the Council of Industrial Design's Design Index: Catherine Moriarty, “A Backroom Service?—The Photographic Library of the Council of Industrial Design, 1945-1965” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000 p 52-53. Another example is the Canadian National Industrial Design Award established in 1953. Here, however, the female-only organization Canadian Association of Consumers (CAC)—who had appointed a member to the award jury—tried to persuade the Canadian National Industrial Design Council to withhold awards until the equipment was tested by an established research group: Joy Parr, “Shopping for a Good Stove—A Parable about Gender, Design, and the Market” in Roger Horowitz and Arwen Mohun (eds.), *His and Hers—Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998) p 176

80. Ask, *op.cit.* p 44 & 57-68

81. Peter Anker, *Norsk brukskunst 1966—keramikk, tekstil, sølv, glass, møbler, porselen, industrial design* (Bergen: Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1966) unpagged

rather than “Silver”.⁸⁴ Such a curious arrangement clearly shows that although the industrial design community itself at this stage had developed a quite distinct professional identity and managed to forge something at least resembling a consensus regarding the understanding of their field of activity, the identity of industrial design was still ambiguous and troublesome in the more traditional sectors of the applied art community.

15.3 The “artification” of arts and craft

Whereas the industrial designers manoeuvred towards new design tasks, moving into domains previously dominated by engineers and seeking greater influence and acceptance in the world of commerce, industry and business, the studio craftsmen were moving in the opposite direction. Aesthetic expression, artistic quality, formal originality and material effects became more and more important aspects of their work while topics such as utilitarian functions, dissemination, manufacturability, etc. were quickly downgraded.⁸⁵

An indication that this latter side of the story received greater support from the established applied art community than the industrial designers did can be found in the fact that the Lunning prize, which in the 1950s had been awarded predominantly to typical “applied artists” (*brukskunstnere*) working across the industry—handicraft divide, in the 1960s almost exclusively was awarded to studio craftsmen and that artistic value became the most important criteria for the jury.⁸⁶

Nils Jørgensen, studio ceramist and teacher at the National Woodwork- and Drawing Teachers College (Statens sløyd- og tegnelærerskole) at Notodden, reported—under the somewhat lofty title “Ceramics and Philosophy”—from a study tour to the USA. Here, he fell in love with the work of Marguerite Wildenhain, a former *bauhäusler* who had most decidedly left the old tenet of *form follows function*. Now, according to Jørgensen, she professed that “common utilitarian function can not diminish the artistic value.”⁸⁷ As

82. *Ibid.* (“når *industrial design* nå rykker inn i Vestlandske Kunsthindustrimuseum men en egen avdeling på brukskunstmønstringen anno 1966 er det... noe av en milepel [sic]... fordi det markerer dagens utvidelse av begrepet brukskunst”)

83. The catalogue does not show which of Enger’s objects that were exhibited, but names “ashtray, platter, jars, candlestick”: *Ibid.* (“askebeger, fat, krukke, lysestake”) However, it is unlikely that these objects belonged to Porsgrund’s industrial production of china, because several sources claim that Enger’s work at Porsgrund in the 1960s was almost exclusively studio production of chamotte stoneware: N.N., “Italiensk heder til norsk brukskunstner” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpaginated [app.], Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 1 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982) p 582 and Alf Bøe, *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år* (Porsgrund/Oslo: Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik/Tanum, 1967) p 247-255

84. Anker, *op.cit.*

85. For more on this new professional identity of craft and its further development, see: Anniken Thue, “Kunsthåndverket 1940-1980” in Knut Berg, Peter Anker, Per Palme and Stephan Tschudi-Madsen (eds.), *Norges kunsthistorie* Vol. 7 (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1983) p 370-390 and Jan-Lauritz Opstad, *En ny bevissthet—norsk kunsthåndverk 1970-1990* (Oslo: Huitfeldt, 1989) For an international perspective, see e.g.: Peter Dormer (ed.), *The Culture of Craft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) and Paul Greenhalgh (ed.), *The Persistence of Craft—The Applied Arts Today* (London: A & C Black, 2002)

86. Astrid Skjerven, *Goodwill for Scandinavian Design—Lunningprisen 1951-70* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2001) p 255-256

we see, the utilitarian function has lost all primacy and been replaced by artistic value: if an object is Art, not even a utilitarian function can ruin that. As a logic consequence, Jørgensen refers to Wildenhain's work not as ceramics, pottery, products, or objects, but as "ceramic works of art".⁸⁸

One of Norway's first true "ceramic artists" was Erik Pløen. He consistently spoke of his trade as handicraft (*kunsthåndverk*), not applied art (*brukskunst*) and thus regarded his work as art represented as ceramic objects rather than art(istic values) applied to a utensil.⁸⁹ It was not just himself who held this view either—the *Bonytt* journalist Harriet Clayhills did not hesitate to label Pløen as an artist.⁹⁰ In accordance with my above remark on the development in the Lunning prize, it is indicative that Pløen was awarded the prize in 1961, heralding in a way the new era of dual discourse.⁹¹ Likewise, it was hardly a coincidence that Clayhills chose an article on Pløen to state that "The boundary between... industrial mass-production and handicraft... will surely become ever sharper".⁹² The development throughout the 1960s would prove her right.

The studio ceramists Dagny and Finn Hald seems to have been quite equivocal in their professional identity, caught in a limbo between art and handicraft: "we are by no means heaven-defying artists... we do not wish to compete with the finest arts", they proclaimed—but on the other hand they distanced themselves from the mundanity of utensils by declaring that "us potters should be occupied with ornamental, that is decorative objects. With expression and not with utilitarian value." This latter statement, plus the fact that they preferred to show their work in a decidedly artistic sphere like the Artists' Association (Kunstnerforbundet) rather than in the traditional applied art settings clearly indicate that the modest rhetoric was coquetry.⁹³

Even a typical "applied artist" (*brukskunstner*) like Arne Jon Jutrem, who worked both with art glass and industrial design for Hadeland glass works, felt compelled to state that "I have not intended my experiments in useless glass as decor, but as sculpture".⁹⁴ [Figure 15-4] So, when the utilitarian function became secondary, inessential or completely absent, the objects had to be reconfigured and legitimized as art—

87. Nils Jørgensen, "Keramikk og filosofi" in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 82 ("alminnelig bruksverdi ikke kan trekke ned den kunstneriske verdi.")

88. *Ibid.* ("keramiske kunstverk")

89. Erik Pløen interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, "Erik Pløen—Ung keramikere med ambisjoner" in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 10

90. Harriet Clayhills, "Erik Pløen går videre" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 10

91. Helena Dahlbäck Lutteman and Marianne Uggla (eds.), *The Lunning Prize* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1986) p 126-129 and Harriet Clayhills, "Lunningprisen og de norske prisvinnere" in Schjødt (ed.), *op.cit.* p 100-104

92. Harriet Clayhills, "Erik Pløen—Ung keramikere med ambisjoner" in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 10 ("Grensen mellom... industrielle serieproduksjon og kunsthåndverk... kommer sikkert til å bli stadig skarpere")

93. Dagny and Finn Hald interviewed in Roar Høyland, "To keramikere har ordet" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 194-200 (vi er ikke noen slike himmelstormende artister på noen måte... Vi ønsker ikke å oppta konkurranse med de aller skjønneste kunster... vi pottmakere skal beskjefte oss med pynte-, altså dekorasjonsgjenstander. Med uttrykk og ikke med bruksverdi.")

94. Arne Jon Jutrem interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, "På reise med Lunningprisen—intervju med Arne Jon Jutrem" in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 40 ("Jeg har ikke ment mine eksperimenter i unyttig glass som dekor, men som skulptur") In the 1960s, Jutrem went freelance and did more industrial design, e.g. an electrical cooker for A/S National Industri and an electrical heater. At the same time, he was recognized as an artist for his paintings and drawings. See: Alf Bøe, *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963) p 153 and Harriet Clayhills, "Arne-Jon Jutrem har ordet" in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 56

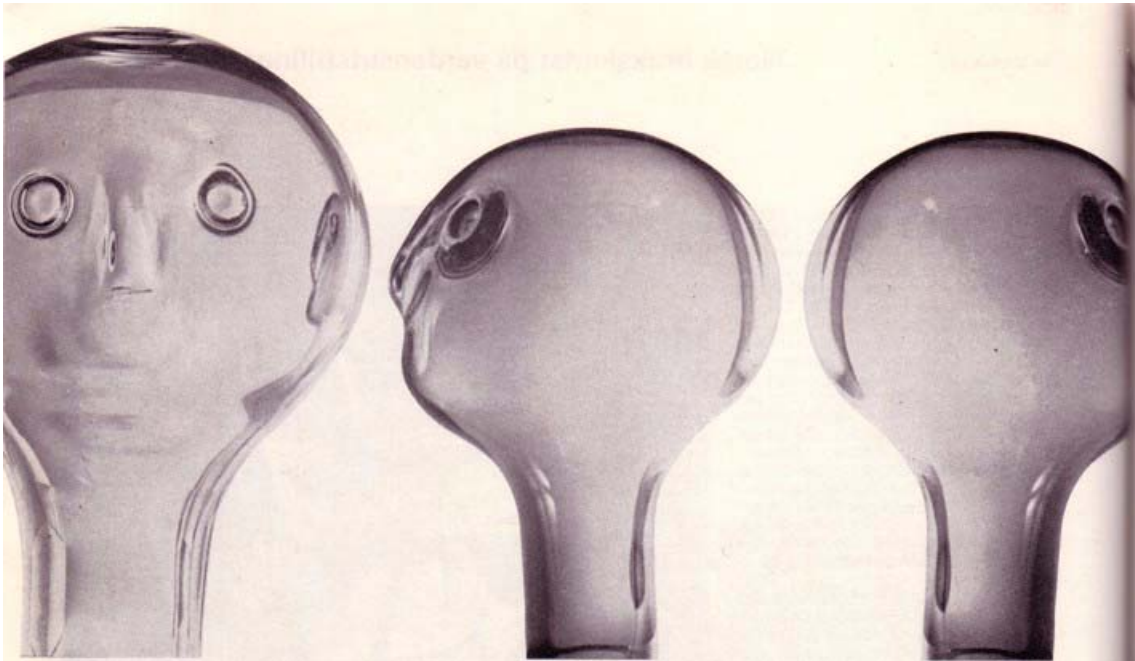


Figure 15–4: Head sculptures (glass) Hadeland, ca. 1964. Designer: Arne Jon Jutrem. Emancipated from any utilitarian function, the craftsman’s work was no longer “just” *applied art* or *decorative art*, but *art*. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 27, 1967)

irrespective of the author’s professional vocation.⁹⁵ In a presentation of the Swedish ceramist Hertha Hillfon, art historian Alf Bøe made use of the same justification technique when he asserted that she

really is a sculptor, not an applied artist [*brukskunstner*]... [E]verything concerning practical usability is completely irrelevant next to what makes her work important: Here it is the expression that counts⁹⁶

Continuing this line of reasoning, Bøe professed that “applied art is about to place the emphasis on *art*” and that “the border between craft and independent expressive art is being erased”.⁹⁷ It thus seems as though the less utilitarian function a craft object had, the more legitimate it became. When it no longer constituted a challenge or alternative to

95. Jutrem made similar arguments in his presentation of the young Danish ceramist Eva Sørensen, who’s work he did not consider to be pottery products, but art: “That it is no longer pots and bowls she makes is merely a natural consequence of the freedom from practical function her world of ideas and her interaction with the material demanded. The stronger her creative power became, the more distant the thought of subjecting the expression to any utilitarian demands”: Arne-Jon Jutrem, “Abstrakt keramikk” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 107 (“At det ikke lenger er krukker og skåler hun fremstiller er kun en naturlig følge av den ubundenhet til praktisk funksjon hennes idéverden og hennes samspill med materialet krevde. Jo sterkere hennes skaperkraft ble, desto fjernere ble tanken på å innordne uttrykket i noen brukskrav.”)

96. Alf Bøe, “Hertha Hillfon” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 122 (“er vel egentlig skulptør, og ikke brukskunstner... alt som har med praktisk brukbarhet å gjøre er helt uvesentlig ved siden av det som gir tyngden i hennes produksjon: Her er det uttrykket som teller”)

97. Alf Bøe, “Form—Fantasi” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 180 (“brukskunsten er ved å legge hovedvekten på *kunst*... grensen mellom håndverk og fri uttrykkskunst viskes ut”)

industrial design, handicraft could be fully appreciated on its own conditions: as unique, hand-made, personal, expressive—in short; as art.

Jens von der Lippe now reconsidered many of his earlier convictions on the relationship between industrial design and handicraft. For a long time, he had been one of the most persistent advocates of genuine craft skills in all branches of design, and insisting on the handicraft's legitimate contribution to the production of utensils even in an industrialized world.⁹⁸ Now, in the 1960s new world of mass-production, free trade and private consumption, von der Lippe concluded resignedly that

the handicraft must become the direct opposite of the industry. The industry constantly increases its ability to satisfy any demand for utensils, and the significance of handicraft as direct production factor is reduced correspondingly, but precisely through this the artistic-aesthetic elements of the handicraft will gain ever growing importance... At the 1961 applied art exhibition there were... a great many examples of handicraft indicating a development in this direction... [characterized by] an increasingly dominating artistic element.⁹⁹

Thus, one of the protagonists of the applied art movement and most tenacious defenders of the holistic approach had capitulated: The formerly united sphere of applied art was irrevocably divided in a domain of industrial design catering to every utilitarian need on the one hand, and handicraft consequently moving closer and closer towards art to find its *raison d'être* on the other.

Likewise, Odd Brochmann wrote that the craftsmen's "work more will resemble that of the true artist" and "does not... have the same social responsibility" as the designer.¹⁰⁰ The widening gap between industrial design and handicraft also had to be reflected in a new educational structure where an industrial design study should be established at university level, while the handicraft training should be more like an academy of fine arts.¹⁰¹

The painter Håkon Stenstadvold had been on the *Bonytt* editorial committee since 1942, but largely wrote on fine art. But as he had now assumed the position of headmaster at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS), his involvement in matters concerning design and handicraft grew. Stenstadvold also agreed that when craft left utilitarian function behind, "there is only *one salvation*:... the pot must become symbol—work of art." But, perhaps since he came from the sphere of fine art himself, he was more pessimistic regarding the

98. See e.g.: Jens von der Lippe, "Keramikk" in *Bo-nytt* no. 2, 1941, p 10 and Jens von der Lippe, "Kunstverdier i bruksting" in *Bo-nytt* No. 2, 1944, p 33

99. Jens von der Lippe, "Mønstring av brukskunst høsten 1961" in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 17 ("kunsthåndverket må komme til å stå som industriens motsetning. Industrien øker stadig sin evne til å dekke alle slags behov for bruksting, og kunsthåndverkets betydning som direkte produksjonsfaktor innskrenkes proporsjonalt, men nettopp ved dette vil de kunstnerisk-estetiske elementer i kunsthåndverket få stadig større betydning... På brukskunstmønstringen 1961 fantes... en stor mengde eksempler på kunsthåndverk som indikerer en utvikling i denne retning... et stadig mere dominerende kunstnerisk element.")

100. Odd Brochmann, "Utdannelse av designere og kunsthåndverkere i Norge—Brev fra styret i Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst til Kirke- og Undervisningsministeren" in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 72 ("virke vil mer falle på linje med den rene kunstners... har... ikke det samme sosiale ansvar")

101. *Ibid.*

chances for Norwegian craft to make this transition. He lauded e.g. the Danish ceramic artist Axel Salto for having made it, but laconically asserted that “we have no one like that here now.” The salient point for Stenstadvold was that if handicraft were to be considered as art, it must be held to the same standard as e.g. his own trade: “There are no requirements of picture quality that can be dropped because the picture is embroidered or baked in ceramics. The picture is either art or unart [sic].”¹⁰² And sadly, he claimed in his self-incriminating “heresy”, Norwegian craft was decidedly more “unart” than art at the moment.

Stenstadvold’s fellow painter Jørgen Skaare—who succeeded Arne Jon Jutrem as director of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) in 1965—expressed a similar attitude, lamenting that in our modern society “everyone” ran off to the art schools and academies to become artists. Skaare paired this rather conservative and elitist outlook with an petition to tear down the traditional borders between fine art and applied art, asking if Pablo Picasso’s work in clay and glass were less art than his paintings. He did, however, see tendencies of liberalization, referring to the fussy process whereby the highly esteemed weaver Hannah Ryggen had finally been accepted as a “fine” artist.¹⁰³

In 1966, *Bonytt* invited the Swedish art historian and critic Ulf Hård af Segerstad to review an exhibition organized by the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) at the cultural-historical museum De Sandvigske Samlinger at Maihaugen in Lillehammer.¹⁰⁴ Segerstad seemed pleased with the quality of much of the exhibited work, but at the same time he criticized what he considered as prevailing universalist conventions in the applied art community: “Why do ceramists continue to turn vases which they do not want you to put flowers in?”¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Arne Jon Jutrem asked when reviewing glass engraving work by Gerd Slang: “Why should you absolutely be able to put something into the fairy-tale of “Little Red Riding Hood”?”¹⁰⁶ In other words: craftsmen with artistic ambition would benefit from discarding altogether any utilitarian functions in their work—it was just a sham after all. Utensils were now the domain of industrial design. Segerstad advocated a pro-active

102. Håkon Stenstadvold, “Kjettetske tanker om vår brukskunst” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 271 (“Der er bare *en* redning:.. krukken må bli symbol—kunstverk... Vi har ingen slike hos oss nu... Der er ingen billedmessig krav som kan bortfalle fordi billedet er brodert eller brent i keramik. Billedet er enten kunst eller ukunst [sic].”)

103. Jørgen Skaare interviewed in Liv Schjødt, “Om grenselandet kunst/brukskunst” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 1-4

104. From 1965, the National Federation organized annual exhibitions at this venue after the annual autumnal exhibitions at the Artists’ Exhibition Building (Kunstnernes hus) in Oslo, which began in 1946, were discontinued in 1963. The exhibitions at Maihaugen were, however, not as comprehensive as the autumnal exhibitions in Oslo had been.

105. Ulf Hård af Segerstad, “Inga fler “bröllop” på Maihaugen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 286 (“Varför framhärda keramikerna med att dreja vaser, som de inte vill att man skall sätta blommor i?”) The applied art exhibitions at Maihaugen in the latter part of the 1960s were remarkable “old-fashioned” in the object selection, returning to showing almost exclusively “beautiful objects for the home” and predominantly handicraft. Industrial design—with the exception of some porcelain and glass—was more or less ignored: Fartein Valen-Sendstad, “Moderne brukskunst på Maihaugen?” in Liv Schjødt (ed.), *Norsk kunsthåndverk—Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst ved 50-årsjubiléet 1968* (Oslo: Bonytt/LNB, 1968) p 15-21, Asbjørn Andresen, “Notater fra en utstilling” in *nye bonytt* No. 8/9, 1968 p 26-29 and N.N., “Brukskunst 69” in *nye bonytt* No. 9, 1969 p 14-19

106. Arne Jon Jutrem, “Frodig i glass” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 29 (“hvorfør skal man på død og liv kunne putte noe oppi eventyret om “Rødhette?”)

attitude towards the development of the trade(s), a catalysis of the professional fragmentation process which had begun in the mid-fifties, dividing the world of *applied art* (*brukskunst*) into the two more specialized spheres of industrial design and handicraft:

While the artistic aspect should be exploited much more consistently regarding *applied art* [*brukskunst*], the objective-functional aspect must be intensified when it comes to *applied art* [*brukskunst*].¹⁰⁷

If the established applied art community continued to cling to the traditional holistic/universalist convictions, Segerstad continued, Nordic design ran the double risk of becoming mere amateurs both in the nascent “artified” handicraft and in industrial design. The marriage between truth and beauty should be broken, he concluded, and the two should form a more casual and flexible relationship better suited to facilitate individual solutions according to shifting situations.¹⁰⁸ The late 1960s thus seem to augur an applied art movement in retreat.

15.4 (Re)organize to professionalize

Organisation and institutionalisation were essential elements in the general professionalization of the modern, technocratic society. This tendency spanned all sectors of the Norwegian society in the 1950s and 1960s, and the design community was no exception. We have above followed one trajectory of this development, namely the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) founded in 1955 as a response to the altering conditions and outlooks of one section of the design community.¹⁰⁹ But, as we have seen, other sectors of the design community also recognized altering conditions and outlooks, and organizational structures and strategies were renegotiated in several camps.

In April 1961, a present member of the *Bonytt* editorial committee—Odd Brochmann—was elected president of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), succeeding a former member of the *Bonytt* editorial committee—Bernt Heiberg.¹¹⁰ Thus, the tight bonds between the organization and the magazine continued, also on a personal level. As should be clear by now, Brochmann was a man of great capacity, ambition and influence, and thus it should come as no surprise that he had major visions for his presidency.

107. Segerstad, *op.cit.* (“Samtidig som det konstnærlige momentet bør utnyttjas langt konsekventare i fråga om brukskunst, så måste det sakligt-funktionella momentet skärpas, så snart det gäller brukskunst.”)

108. *Ibid.* p 287

109. The Norwegian industrial designers thus founded their trade organization two years before their colleagues in the more heavily industrialized neighbouring country Sweden did the same: Rune Monö, Torsten Dahlin and Hans Sjöholm, “Industridesignern organiserar sig” in Lasse Brunnström (ed.), *Svensk industridesign: en 1900-talshistoria* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1997) p 161-169

110. Arne Remlov, “Presidentuttalelser til Bonytt” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 161

All through its forty-two years of existence, the organization's primary objective and method had been public propaganda through exhibitions and other activities. But Brochmann was not particularly satisfied with how this work functioned. He had recently criticised the applied art movement for what he considered to be a condescending and arrogant attitude towards the general public.¹¹¹ But at the same time, he felt resigned and disillusioned regarding the consumer's agency and commitment.¹¹² This seemingly paradoxical stance was only complicated when paired with his highly critical view of the workings of capitalist industry and marketing as well as a general culture-pessimism. In short, Brochmann had seen the limitations of conventional propaganda work. It seems only cogent, then, that he presaged a new direction and strategy for the National Federation and their cause.

The hitherto strategy of reform-by-demand had to be replaced by a strategy of reform-by-supply. This was to be implemented by shifting the focus from educating the consumer to educating the designer. Brochmann had by no means given up on his life-long mission to convert the populace's taste, though: "my innermost conviction is that the public will follow suit when one has something good to show them".¹¹³ And one of the basic requirements for an improved design profession was, according to Brochmann, to obtain greater power, influence and acknowledgment for the designers as professionals and actors in industry, politics, media and society at large.

Two classic features or devices appearing in most professionalization processes were pointed out as top priorities for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) as well: An effective and influential trade organization, followed by improved education. Both these questions generated much dispute, turbulence and problems throughout the 1960s and well into the 1970s—in all fractions of the design community.

Turning first to the organizational structure of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) it is crucial to acknowledge that from its inception as the Association Applied Art (Foreningen Brukskunst) in 1918 onwards, this organization had never been a trade organization, but an interest group incorporating both design practitioners, theoreticians, manufacturers and the interested public.¹¹⁴ In 1930, the Norwegian Applied Artists' Union (Norsk Brukskunstnerlag) had been founded as a subgroup for the practicing designers and craftsmen within the Association Applied Art (Foreningen Brukskunst), functioning more or less like a guild.¹¹⁵ The Norwegian Applied Artists' Union existed after the war as well—around 1950, for instance, ID-gruppen co-founder Thorbjørn Rygh was its president and Figgjo's design manager Ragnar Grimsrud headed the Stavanger chapter—but it could

111. Odd Brochmann, "Brukskunstneren—eller ridderen av den utydelige skikkelse" in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 27

112. Odd Brochmann, "Brukskunst for folket" in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 41-43

113. Odd Brochmann interviewed in Remlov, *op.cit.* p 162 ("min innerste overbevisning er at publikum nok følger efter når man bare har noe godt å vise dem")

114. Brochmann had pointed to what he considered to be the confusions and problems following this type of organizational policy already in 1954: Odd Brochmann, "Brukskunst og brukskunstnere" in *Dagbladet* 29.10.1954

115. Randi Gaustad, *Foreningen Brukskunst 1918-30: Program, utstillinger og kritikk* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1973) p 117

not have functioned satisfactorily to Brochmann, because he made no mention of it when he proclaimed the necessity of establishing a trade union for practicing designers and craftsmen of all shapes and sizes.

When interviewing Brochmann about this aspect of the National Federation's new agenda, Arne Remlov asked the president

But the problems in establishing such a union will be in the heterogeneous character of the applied art trade [*brukskunstnerstanden*], and that the applied artists [*brukskunstnerne*] work under such different conditions, partly as personally creative craftsmen, partly as designers?¹¹⁶

Brochmann admitted that it would be a problem, but one that had to be overcome, because he saw it as the primary goal of the National Federation "to strengthen the homogeneity in this community".¹¹⁷ This is probably why he did not make any reference to the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)), which *was* a genuine trade union for designers—but their separatist attitudes which excluded craftsmen conflicted gravely with Brochmann's universalist beliefs. Brochmann's other strategy in the desire to homogenize the design community was educational reform. He wanted a broader and more thorough general education of designers in social and cultural matters and to de-emphasize the material-based division of branches of study.¹¹⁸

Brochmann did not want to turn the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) into a trade union, but made it clear that the organization would promote the founding of such a generalistic trade union.¹¹⁹ While educational reforms proved long in coming, his efforts on the organizational scene soon bore fruit: Two years later, in 1963, the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere) was founded as a trade union under the wings of the National Federation,¹²⁰ and the designer Arne Jon Jutrem was elected chairman. The Norwegian Applied Artists was to promote the ethical, legal and economic interests, as well the professional quality and recognition of the trade.¹²¹ Like the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers, the Norwegian Applied Artists laid down rules for membership based on education or acknowledgment by peers, but unlike ID-gruppen, the new organization did not discriminate on basis of manufacturing methods—they welcomed both industrial designers as well as craftsmen.

In 1965, the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) was reorganized and became an umbrella organization. No personal memberships were allowed any longer, only trade unions and other relevant

116. Remlov, *op.cit.* ("Men vanskelighetene ved å få dannet en slik forening ligger vel i brukskunstnerstandens heterogene karakter, og at brukskunstnerne arbeider under så forskjellige forutsetninger, dels som personlig skapende håndverkere, dels som designere?")

117. Odd Brochmann interviewed in Remlov, *op.cit.* ("å styrke homogeniteten i dette miljø")

118. *Ibid.*

119. Remlov, *op.cit.*

120. It might thus be seen as a reorganization of the Norwegian Applied Artists' Union (Norsk Brukskunstnerlag)

121. Mette Grieg Toyomasu, *Fra brukskunst til kunsthåndverk, en fagpolitisk opprydning. Keramikeren Yngvild Fagerheim som eksponent for en kunstnergruppe* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1997) p 27-29

organizations were eligible for membership of five different categories: I. Professionals (Faggruppen), II. Schools and cultural institutions (Gruppen for skoler og kulturinstitusjoner), III. Production and trade (Gruppe for produksjon og omsetning), IV. Consumers (Forbrukergruppen) and V. Governmental (Gruppe for offentlige myndigheter).¹²² The National Federation's principal function would be to act as a coordinating body for the different trade unions eligible for membership of category I.: the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere), the Norwegian Organization of Interior Architects (Norske Interiørarkitekters Landsforening), the Norwegian Association of Architects (Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund—NAL) and the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)).¹²³

ID-gruppen discussed their participation rather thoroughly before deciding to join, but some of their members had been active in the reformation of the National Federation and it is therefore plausible that the new organizational structure was approved of by ID-gruppen as well.¹²⁴ An umbrella organization may very well have been interpreted as less of a competitor than the old version at times had been. The fact that Alf Bøe, a close friend of ID-gruppen and their cause, was elected president of the National Federation might also have influenced their decision.

The reorganization of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) must be understood in light of the professional fragmentation process which, as we have seen, began in the mid-fifties, where the movement, term and profession associated with *applied art* (*brukskunst*) was fragmented, specialized and challenged from two sides; industrial design (*industridesign*) and handicraft (*kunsthåndverk*). The 1965 reorganization of the National Federation thus represented a strategy from the established applied art community to maintain order and discipline in the community and preserve their holistic/universalist convictions which were facing quite a crossfire. By becoming an umbrella organization, the National Federation allowed more autonomy and freedom of manoeuvre for the trade organizations with their increasingly differing agendas and interests.

This compromise survived until 1978 when both the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) [by then renamed ID. Norwegian Industrial Designers (ID. Norske Industridesignere)] and the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere) [by then renamed Norwegian Craftworkers (Norske Kunsthåndverkere)] broke with the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst).¹²⁵ But already in the late 1960s, even the most loyal protagonists and advocates of the applied art movement

122. Examples of members in the five different categories in 1967: I.: The Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere), II.: The Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo), III.: The department store Steen & Strøm, IV.: The Norwegian Society of Rural Women (Norges Bondekvinneforbund) and V.: the Norwegian Export Council (Norges eksportråd): Toyomasu, *op.cit.* p 31

123. *Ibid.* p 29-33 & 129-132

124. *ID-gruppen—Styreprotokoll 1965*, NID archives and Alf Bøe, "Fra broderi til gravemaskin" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 105

125. Ask, *op.cit.* p 158

found it harder and harder to argue for the future role and continued necessity of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst).¹²⁶ Turning 50 years of age proved to be no picnic for the organization.¹²⁷

The Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) was founded by the Norwegian Export Council (Norges Eksportråd) and the Federation of Norwegian Industries (Norges Industriforbund) in 1963 and opened in 1965.¹²⁸ As we have seen, the two founding organizations had already been enrolled in the industrial design community—first as founders and patrons of the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) after an initiative by the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in 1961, and later as co-organizers of the 1963 exhibition *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) together with the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) and the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers.

This process of enrolment of the Norwegian Export Council and the Federation of Norwegian Industries was highly symbolic in negotiating the acceptance of industrial design in both industrial and governmental circles. That the relations between governmental administration and the design community became closer and more formalized must also be seen as a part in what the Norwegian historian Francis Sejersted has dubbed “the new administrative corporatism”—a system developed by the social democratic government in the 1950s and 1960s designed to create tighter networks between interest groups, professional and industrial bodies and the public administration.¹²⁹ The motivation behind this strategy and system was of course to secure legitimacy for governmental policies by involving professional expertise in policy development decision-making.

Also, with the establishment of the Norwegian Design Centre, design had moved considerably from the cultural sphere into the fiscal sphere. The fiscal ambitions of the new institution were apparent also in the statutes:

The institution's... aim is to promote good industrial design of Norwegian manufactured goods with a view to make Norwegian industry more competitive both domestically and internationally¹³⁰

126. See e.g.: Arne Remlov, “Trenger vi ‘Brukskunst’?” in *nye bonytt* No. 5, 1969, p 3

127. Founded as the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) in 1918, the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1968: Schjødt (ed.), *op.cit.* In a tardy admission of the troublesome image of the term applied art, the organization changed its name in 1986 to the National Federation Norwegian Form (Landsforbundet Norsk Form). It was closed down in 1993, but parts of its functions and much of its spirit lived on through the foundation Norwegian Form (Norsk Form) which was established the very same year and is still active today: Toyomasu, *op.cit.* p 62-63

128. The Norwegian Design Centre is an important organization in the institutionalization and professionalization of the design community in the 1960s. I will, however, keep my discussion of this organization brief for the sake of bearing and scope—chiefly limited to where the trajectory of the Norwegian Design Centre intersects with my narrative of design ideology and mediation. The history of the Norwegian Design Centre is summarized in: Jan Romsaas, *Norsk Designråd—Arkivprosjektet 2003—Sluttrapport* [Unpublished report] (Oslo: Norsk Designråd, 2003) p 8-28 and discussed in Ask, *op.cit.*

129. Sejersted, *op.cit.* p 337-340 (“Den nye forvaltningskorporativisme”)

Here, good design was seen as a competitive factor in the manufactured goods industry—not as cultural education of the populace. This reorientation and expansion of the design domain was noted also by the cultural elite, but not necessarily—as one might have expected—with lament and regret. As the art historian and director of the West Norway Museum of Decorative Art (Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum), Peter Anker, commented:

The breakthrough of *Industrial design* in recent years is undoubtedly connected with the restructuring which has taken place in our nation's business life and export industry... It is indicative of the rapid development in this field that the Norwegian Design Centre is established under the protective wings of the Norwegian Export Council, so to speak¹³¹

The British Council of Industrial Design established in 1944, and its Design Centre opened in 1956, served as a role model for the Norwegian Design Centre as it did for other promotional organizations set up in the 1960s in Greece, Japan and elsewhere.¹³² As one means in the promotional work outlined in the statutes, the institution took over the responsibility for the Norwegian Design Award. The other major weapon in their public promotion of good design was the permanent exhibition space designed by architect Otto Torgersen,¹³³ opened on January 5th 1965 in the Industriens og Eksportens Hus in Oslo, as the first design centre in Scandinavia. The Norwegian Design Centre had 2250 square metres floor space at its disposal, making it the biggest of its kind in Europe.¹³⁴

Whereas more traditional design exhibitions selected products through a curator or a jury, the Norwegian Design Centre invited manufacturers to display their products for a moderate fee. Hence, there was no quality assurance in what was allowed into the exhibition room. This function—discerning good design from dissatisfactory design

130. *Vedtekter for stiftelsen Norsk Designcentrum* A1 00.00.63 Norsk Designråd archive (“Stiftelsen... har til formål å fremme god industriell formgivning av norske industriprodukter med henblikk på å gjøre norsk industri mer konkurransedyktig i inn- og utland”)

131. Anker, *op.cit.* (“*Industrial design's* gjennombrudd i de senere år har utvilsomt sammenheng med den omstrukturering som har funnet sted i vårt lands næringsliv og eksportindustri... Det er betegnende for den raske utvikling på dette felt at Norsk Design-senter [sic] er opprettet så å si under Norges Eksportråds beskyttende vinger”)

132. Ask, *op.cit.* p 76-78, Artemis Yagou, “Unwanted Innovation—The Athens Design Centre (1961-1963)” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005, p 269-283 esp. 276-277, Jonathan M. Woodham, *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p 173-174 and Judy Attfield, “Good Design by Law: Adapting Utility Furniture to Peacetime Production: Domestic Furniture in the Reconstruction Period 1946-56” in Patrick Joseph Maguire and Jonathan M. Woodham (eds.), *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain: Britain Can Make it Exhibition of 1946* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997) p 106-107. For a study of the British Council of Industrial Design and its fight for design reform, see: Jonathan M. Woodham, “Managing British design reform I: fresh perspectives on the early years of the Council of Industrial Design” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 9, No. 1, 1996, p 55-65

133. Otto Torgersen had studied at Goldsmiths College in London in the late 1930s, and together with Christian Pran he designed the chemistry buildings at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (1948-1959): Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunsterleksikon* Vol. 4 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1986) p 271 and Olaf Devik (ed.), *N.T.H. femti år—Norges tekniske høgscoles virksomhet 1910-1960* (Oslo: Teknisk ukeblad, 1960) p 183 & 218

134. *Norge får Europas største permanente designcentrum* [press release] A1 00.00.64 Norsk Designråd archive

were to be ensured by letting a permanent jury award a Mark of Design Excellence (Merket for god design) to the products deemed worthy of representing good design.¹³⁵

It is worth mentioning that neither the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) nor the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) played any official role in the establishment of the Norwegian Design Centre.¹³⁶ Given the already existing relationship between ID-gruppen and the Norwegian Export Council and the Federation of Norwegian Industries though, there should be no doubt that ID-gruppen must have been an important unofficial partner.¹³⁷ Furthermore, ID-gruppen president Thorbjørn Rygh became board member of the Norwegian Design Centre—as did Thorvald Krohn-Hansen, director of the National Museum of Decorative Arts in Trondheim (Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum), a typical representative of the applied art community. Krohn-Hansen was also made chairman of the Norwegian Design Centre's Council (Norsk Designcentrums Råd), a consultative body where both ID-gruppen, the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere) and the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) held seats alongside representatives from a multitude of trade associations, trade unions and other cultural, governmental and business organizations.¹³⁸

This intertwined actor network should illustrate that although the Norwegian Design Centre was initiated on the fringes of the design community and surely developed a more industry and business oriented attitude towards design promotion, virtually all of the institutions and many of the actors of the traditional design community were involved in the workings of the Norwegian Design Centre as well. The very epitome of these inter-institutional relations was Alf Bøe. As we have seen, the art historian Bøe was senior curator at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) where he

135. Because of this practice, the Norwegian Design Centre exhibition activity was criticised for being little more than a trade fair, open as it was for anyone with money to buy exhibition space. In an attempt to overcome this criticism, the Centre soon introduced what was described as a “mild” prejudgement of products. But the manufacturers would still enjoy considerable freedom in choosing which products to exhibit. As we have seen, this criticism came to the fore in *Bonytt*—especially uttered by editor Arne Remlov and co-editor Liv Schjødt—who blamed the Norwegian Design Centre for exhibiting “designless” products. Introducing the Mark of Design Excellence (Merket for god design) seems to have had some soothing effect on *Bonytt*, because they willingly promoted many of the products which had received this distinction. But *Bonytt* would have preferred the solution which was chosen when plans for a Danish design centre were released, revealing that this would exhibit only products approved by a jury. Per Aarstad, *Norsk Designcentrum* [circular letter to industrial companies] A1 09.06.64 Norsk Designråd archive, *Beretning for året 1965* [annual report] Norsk Designråd archive, Arne Remlov, “Merker og priser for design” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 20, Liv Schjødt, “Fra forvirringens verden” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 92, Arne Remlov, “Designpriser 1966” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 156 and N.N., “Danskene for også sitt designsentrum” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpagged [app.]

136. The Norwegian Export Council and the Federation of Norwegian Industries had been asked by the Advisory Committee for the Readjustment of the Domestic Industry (Det rådgivende utvalg for hjemmeindustriens omstilling) to investigate the establishment of a permanent design centre. In January 1963, the Norwegian Export Council and the Federation of Norwegian Industries appointed a committee consisting chiefly of industry representatives: Factory Owner Nils Fredrik Aall, General Manager Alf Knudsen of A/S Kolbjørn Knudsen & Co., Sales Manager Wilh. Kluck of Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik A/S, Marketing Director Trygve Strømstad of A/S Nordisk Aluminiumsindustri, General Manager Aage Snilsberg of A/S Norsk Elektrisk Kabelfabrik, Director Lauritz B. Bachke of the Federation of Norwegian Industries and Head of Section Per Aarstad of the Norwegian Export Council: Nils Fredrik Aall, *et al.*, *Innstilling til Det rådgivende utvalg for hjemmeindustriens omstilling om opprettelse av et permanent design-sentrum i Oslo* A1 13.05.63 Norsk Designråd archive

initiated the 1963 exhibition *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design*. In 1965 he was elected president of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) and thus also joined the *Bonytt* editorial committee.¹³⁹ So, when he in 1968 as Per Aarstad's successor became the second director of the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum), Alf Bøe's omnipresence and multitasking in the design community reached its zenith.¹⁴⁰

The Norwegian Design Centre was an ambitious project, and a costly one.¹⁴¹ The institution's only source of income was the sale of exhibition space, and it soon became clear that the potential revenues of this activity were severely limited and would never become the financial backbone it had been intended to be.¹⁴² Many attempts at reorganization to a more realistic organizational structure were made in the late 1960s. But as the 1960s had become the 1970s, the Ministry of Industry lost its patience with what looked more and more like a white elephant. In 1974, the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) was closed down, but replaced by the Council of Industrial Design (Rådet for industridesign), intended to continue the promotion of good Norwegian industrial design—but on a much less comprehensive scale.¹⁴³

15.5 Conclusion

This chapter has traced some of the processes forming new positions and framing new developments in design practice in the 1960s. First we followed the continued articulation of industrial design as a distinct field, activity and profession. Having formed their own trade union in 1955, the slowly but steadily growing group of self-proclaimed industrial designers continued to work towards an increased professionalisation and specialisation of their field. This work proved strenuous and protracted, but the general identification of

137. Alf Bøe, "Fra broderi til gravemaskin" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 105

138. *Medlemmer i styre, råd, arbeidsutvalg, jury og komiteer* A1 00.00.64 Norsk Designråd archive

139. *Bonytt* had been the official organ for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—LNB) since 1947 and remained so until 1970. Part of the agreement was that the National Federation got to appoint member(s) of the magazine's editorial committee, normally their president. For a couple of years in the mid-1960s, however, the agreement had been temporarily suspended—although merely for administrative reasons—and *Bonytt* was in this period published "in collaboration with" the National Federation. This specification is just a organizational technicality, and was considered as such by the *Bonytt* editors as well—the collaboration between the two institutions continued as before throughout this period as well, until the agreement was restored from 1968. But technically, Alf Bøe was appointed to the *Bonytt* editorial staff by the magazine itself, not the National Federation: N.N., "Bonytt—Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst" in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpagged [app.] ("i samarbeid med")

140. Per Aarstad did not come from the design community's ranks; he had been a Head of Section in the Norwegian Export Council

141. Many similar institutions across Europe modelled after the British Council of Industrial Design ran into problems much like those with which the Norwegian Design Centre struggled. For instance, the Greek equivalent was perhaps even more over-ambitious and less successful than the Norwegian: Yagou, *op.cit.*

142. Per Aarstad, *Norsk Designcentrum—Ansøking om statsstøtte for 1966* [Application for State subsidy] S1 27.01.66 Norsk Designråd archive

143. Ask, *op.cit.* p 49-51. The Council of Industrial Design (Rådet for industridesign) later developed into today's Norwegian Design Council (Norsk Designråd).

industrial design as an increasingly articulated field and activity came a long way during the 1960s.

The nature of this process was then sought clarified further and put in relief by contrasting it to the parallel formation of another new position; the “artification” of arts and craft. In a society permeated by industrial goods catering to any need and desire for more or less utilitarian objects, the studio craftsmen began constructing a new identity where the artistic values completely outstripped the utilitarian ones. This meant that the craftsmen joined the industrial designers in challenging the established order of the applied art community.

The last part of this chapter has discussed the different efforts within the design community at large to (re)organize to professionalize. In various ways, the founding of the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere), the reorganisation of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) and the establishing of the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) represented efforts to form new positions and to frame new developments in design practice within the field of design.

In this chapter we have seen *modern transformed* in the realm of vocational politics. The applied art movement and community, which had been the undisputed hub of modern design ideology and debate in Norway for more than half a century, was now on the defensive. Their quest of upholding a universalist design community became more and more a losing game as industrial design and handicraft were consolidated as increasingly autonomous fields. In this climate of dissatisfaction and repositioning, both the ideological framework of design practice and the organisational structure was subjected to extensive revisions.

The next chapter will continue the investigation of various attempts at *clearing the agenda*, but with a different focus. We shall see how the cultural functions and aspects as well as the aesthetic and emotional properties of design became central to the wider design community’s efforts at maintaining a certain degree of common ground and mutual cause in a time of fragmentation of the profession and of ideological unrest.

16 Form, fame, finesse and feelings: Aesthetic quality as reconciliation strategy

16.1 Introduction

Whereas the previous chapter (and the next) discusses new positions and radical reorientations, this chapter will point to some debates that either represent continuity of concerns or strategies for unification in this period of critical change. How could the newly gained strength and momentum of the ‘Scandinavian Design’ phenomenon be upheld? What would be the best strategy for countering or at least mitigating the growing fragmentation of the design field? In addition, we shall see how a couple of controversial issues regarding artefacts’ emotional properties and consumer agency were reconfigured and reframed according to transformations in design ideology as well as to broader societal changes.

The first topic under investigation in this chapter is the lingering desire for international fame. As we have seen, the Norwegian design community had achieved a certain level of attention and acclaim at a few international events in the 1950s, and there seems to have been a desire to build on these experiences and continue this trend into the 1960s. What is most interesting about this continued international promotion is that it seems to develop, not in tandem with the above discussed shifts in export conditions for Norwegian industry, but rather counter to these radical changes in international relations. Because the applied art community’s promotion of Norwegian design abroad became even less concerned with commerce and even more centred on culture than it had been the preceding decade.

The mid-section of this chapter will analyse how the applied art community constructed and negotiated their major strategy for maintaining the holistic and universalist approach to design in a time where these ideals were being challenged and criticised. The strategy chosen can be described as insisting on the artistic aspects of design as the primary unifying trait of all design disciplines. Upholding the primacy of artistic intention and quality as the defining principle would, however, not be unproblematic in the heated negotiations on internal unification and external demarcation of the design field.

The last part of this chapter is devoted to discussions on a couple of issues that were rather controversial within a modernist design ideology. The first of these is a rather curious effort at justifying “the need for cosiness”. A long shunned, almost taboo issue, the tireless missionaries of modernism now began to acknowledge and consider the emotional functions of objects as legitimate concerns and of great importance to design. However, the long-standing reign of utilitarianism made the discussions and arguments at times rather quaint and overly tentative. The second controversy was a new round on the question of whether the consumer should be considered a friend or a foe. As with the

debate on cosiness, neither this discussion can be said to have resolved the problems it sought to address, but they are both testimony to a greater openness and willingness in the design community to discuss matters that long had been eschewed.

16.2 The lingering desire for international fame

As we have seen above, the task of propagandising Norwegian design internationally commanded great attention and effort in the 1950s. This work was, however, chiefly concentrated on the cultural scene rather than the commercial scene. Hence, these official, collective actions resulted in awards at the *Triennale di Milano*, but did not generate much export revenues. In this context it is essential to remember, though, that the very modest export must be seen in connection with a sufficiently large domestic market, limited production volumes and tariff barriers on the lucrative foreign markets.

These structural conditions changed drastically in the 1960s. Accordingly, the lingering desire for international fame seems to have been catalysed by the new and improved export possibilities opened up by the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) membership. Nonetheless, the design community still left the commercial propagandising of Norwegian design internationally to the industry itself, and continued to focus on the cultural scene. The design community saw it as its task to create cultural goodwill for Norwegian design, not to create sales—fame had precedence over fortune.¹ As the painter and director (1965-1970) of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) Jørgen Skaare put it: “There is no reason to believe that these two interests, the commercial and the cultural, can not collaborate. But the old proverb ‘Cobbler, stick to thy last’ applies, now as before.”² Even though the great international propaganda events of the 1950s lost some of their remarkable prominence in the decade to come, they would still play a significant role in the autopoiesis of the Norwegian design community in the 1960s—from the *XII Triennale di Milano* in 1960 to the Australian touring exhibition *Design in Scandinavia* in 1968.

Recalling the turmoil caused by the controversial organization of the Norwegian contribution to the *XI Triennale di Milano* in 1957 and its dual sector manifestation resulting from two separate initiatives,³ one might say that things went back to normal with the *XII Triennale di Milano* in 1960. The National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) reassumed responsibility for the organization of

1. However, the design community did applaud the few radical initiatives taken by the industry itself to promote export. For instance, *Bonytt* was proud to present the new Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik showroom *Designs of Scandinavia* opened in 1961 on Regent Street in London—although it was labelled a “audacious enterprise!": N.N., “Designs of Scandinavia” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 41-44 (“dristig foretagende!”)

2. Jørgen Skaare, “Skandinavisk Design—Et kommersielt eller et estetisk program” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpagged [app.] (“Det er ingen grunn til å mene at ikke disse to interesser, de kommersielle og de kulturelle, kan samarbeide. Men det gamle ordspråk ‘Skomaker bli ved din lest’, gjelder nå som før”)

3. The Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) had assumed responsibility for the task, but in parallel, a private initiative took form based on the recent business collaboration between the designers Grete Prytz and Arne Korsmo, the National Institute of Industrial Research (Sentralinstituttet for industriell forskning) and the manufacturers J. Tostrup and Cathrineholm A/S.

the Norwegian contribution, with Ferdinand Aars as commissary-general and Odd Brochmann as exhibition designer. But as opposed to the *X Triennale* in 1954, Norwegian participation was secured only at the eleventh hour, and as a joint venture between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Norwegian-Italian Chamber of Commerce, and company sponsors.⁴ Despite limited resources, Brochmann was pleased with his work: “I wished to gather what little we had to offer in a display case which could appear sumptuous, colourful and radiant”.⁵ [Figure 16-1].



Figure 16–1: Top: Norway’s exhibition at the *XII Triennale di Milano* in 1960. Exhibition design by Odd Brochmann. Bottom: The Figgjo products exhibited at the *XII Triennale di Milano*. Left: Pot/soup tureen prototype for the new oven-to-table *Vulcanus* series designed by Hermann Bongard. Middle: Mocha set in matte black or white glaze designed by Ragnar Grimsrud. Right: White, undecorated versions of the *Vulcanus* frying pans designed by Hermann Bongard. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 20, 1960 and L. Opstad (ed.), *Tegneren Hermann Bongard* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1971) (bottom left))

4. *Bonytt*, “Meldinger”, No. 7-8, 1960, p 2

5. Odd Brochmann, “Den XII Triennale i Milano” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 183 (“jeg ønsket å samle det lille vi hadde å by på i en monter som kunne virke overdådig, farverik og glitrende”)

Although the 1957 exhibition had not been devoid of handicraft objects, it very much bore the mark of the industrial design community. No wonder, then, that the National Federation's reclaiming of authority also resonated in the 1960 exhibition—it was clearly a manifestation of the applied art community's understanding of design. Gone were the washing machine, the kitchen stove, the refrigerator, the water heater, the cash registers and the calculating machine which had been showed at the *XI Triennale*. At the *XII Triennale*, Norway once again appeared as the epitome of the old Paulssonian idea of *more beautiful everyday goods* (*vackrare vardagsvara*).

Apart from some traditional chair sledges (*sparkstøttinger*) ridden by dolls dressed up as school children and other paraphernalia functioning as props rather than exhibits,⁶ the Norwegian contribution in 1960 consisted almost exclusively of handicraft objects and classical industrial art products designated for aestheticising the home, such as studio ceramics, jewellery, figurines, woodshop objects, silverware, hand-woven textiles and art glass—but also textiles, glass, cutlery, ceramics, lighting fixtures and furniture of a more industrialized production.⁷ An example of the latter category may be the Dokka 1001 chairs in steel, Brazilian rosewood and leather designed by Sven Ivar Dysthe,⁸ as well as the selected Figgjo products: Two pot prototypes belonging to the new oven-to-table *Vulcanus* series designed by Hermann Bongard along with white, undecorated versions of the adjoining frying pans, plus a low volume series mocha set in matte black or white glaze designed by Ragnar Grimsrud. This strategy is hardly surprising, but choosing to exhibit prototypes and low volume products seems odd, especially since the Norwegian organizing committee claimed to exhibit

utensils in current use in Norwegian homes, with the intention of demonstrating how the collaboration between industry and designers leads to results of considerable interest, both from a functional and a formal point of view.⁹

A plausible explanation could be that Aars & co. found greater aesthetic pleasure in the somewhat rugged glazing of the prototypes—because they protected their retreat by clarifying that in addition to the “utensils in current use”, some “test products” were shown too, insofar as these could “orient and stimulate the industrial production.”¹⁰

Odd Brochmann was—given the limited funding and space available—content with his exhibition design and thus the *form* of the manifestation. The *content*, on the other hand, was of less satisfaction to him: “I will not comment on the quality of the exhibited,

6. Bonytt, “Meldinger”, No. 7-8, 1960, p 2

7. Ferdinand Aars and Odd Brochmann, “Norvegia” in Ivan Matteo Lombardo, *et al.* (eds.), *Catalogo della Dodicesima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1960) p 118-119

8. The 1001 chair and the rest of this furniture series was no cheap product. But although it made use of expensive and exclusive materials, its manufacture was quite industrialized compared with other furniture. For a history of the interesting furniture manufacturer (Hov-)Dokka and its collaboration with the designer Sven Ivar Dysthe—a very influential couple in Norwegian furniture design in the 1960s, see: Eldar Høidal, *Hov Dokka—en Riise i norsk møbelindustri* (Sykkylven: Norsk møbelfaglig senter, 1997) esp. p 98-99

9. Aars and Brochmann, *op.cit.* p 30 (“oggetti d’uso corrente nelle case norvegesi, con l’intento di dimostrare come la collaborazione tra industrial e designers conduca a risultati di notevole interesse, sia dal punto di vista funzionale che formale.”)

10. *Ibid.* (“prove... orientare e stimolare la produzione industriale.”)

but for the sake of the totality I could have wished for a greater variation in forms, colours and materials.”¹¹ Being a tactful man, this wording was probably as far as Brochmann would go in publicly criticising Ferdinand Aars with whom he collaborated so closely both on this and former occasions. More remarkable, however, was the far more overt criticism of both Aars and Brochmann from *Bonytt*'s editor-in-chief Arne Remlov:

I have not myself had the opportunity to see our exhibition at the Triennial in Milan, but judging by photographs of the stand and comments from a number of those who have seen it, it seems we would have been far better off and more correctly represented if the exhibition had been under Tormod Alnæs' direction... That goes for the selection of objects as well.¹²

The interior architect and designer Tormod Alnæs had designed the Applied Art Association in Oslo's (Foreningen Brukskunst i Oslo) 1960 autumnal exhibition, and it was this accomplishment that made Remlov blurt out Alnæs' name in his criticism of the *Triennale* contribution.¹³ Let us take a moment to recapture some aspects of the relations Remlov had to Aars and Brochmann. The omnipresent Aars, who was secretary-general of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), had been on the editorial committee of *Bonytt* from 1953 to 1957 and was thus the very incarnation of the tight bond between the Federation and the magazine. Odd Brochmann was still on the editorial committee of *Bonytt* and had been one of its most energetic and frequent contributors for many years. So, when Remlov blatantly accused his long-standing colleagues of having done a bad job and even asserts that a “rookie” like Alnæs would have outclassed them, it demonstrates that the design community was full of tensions, but also that there was room for such tensions—also among close comrades.¹⁴

Another contemporary, but very different attempt to gain international attention for Norwegian design abroad was a little commercial exhibition in New York in the summer of 1960. The initiative came from the independent New York department store Georg Jensen Inc. The company, founded by the Danish emigrant Fredrik Lunning (patron of the Lunning Prize), had hired the Norwegian interior architect Karen Vigmostad and decided to put on a show of Norwegian products for the home. In collaboration with the

11. Brochmann, *op.cit.* p 183-184 (“Om kvaliteten av det utstilte vil jeg ikke uttale meg, men for helhetens skyld kunne jeg nok ha ønsket meg en større variasjon av former, farver og materialer.”)

12. Arne Remlov, “Ved inngangen til 1960-årene” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 201 (“Jeg har ikke selv hatt anledning til å se vår utstilling på Triennalen i Milano, men å dømme etter fotografier av standen og uttalelser fra en rekke av dem som har sett den, synes det at vi hadde vært langt bedre tjent med om utstillingen hadde vært i Tormod Alnæs' regi... Det gjelder vistnok [sic] også utvalget av ting.”)

13. *Ibid.* p 186

14. Another incident which supports this perception of *Bonytt* as a quite tolerant medium was a harsh public row between Remlov and the architect Christian Norberg-Schulz, who was on the magazine's editorial board, on the role of the interior architect. Norberg-Schulz claimed that the interior architect was a useless parasite wedging his way in between the territories of the architect and the designer, whereupon Remlov defended the legitimacy of his profession and accused his opponent and colleague of violate professional ethic. See: Christian Norberg-Schulz, “Nye brukskunsttendenser” in *Arkitektnytt* Vol. 9, 1960, p 200, Arne Remlov, “Pip fra en mellom to stoler” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 10 and Christian Norberg-Schulz, “Interiør og eksteriør” in *Arkitektnytt* Vol. 10, 1961, p 36-37

Oslo-based interior architect and designer Cato Mansrud, they invited the designers and artisans featured in the 1959 *Bonytt* publication *33 Norwegian Designers* and made a selection based on this.¹⁵ The exhibition was set up in New York by Vigmostad and received some laudable reviews, but there is nothing to indicate that it generated much sales.¹⁶

The *XII Triennale* in 1960 would turn out to be Norway's last appearance at this Milanese event. A contribution to the *XIII Triennale* in 1964 never materialised, much due to an argument over organizational issues between the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)), the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere) and the Norwegian Organization of Interior Architects (Norske Interiørarkitekters Landsforening) and lack of governmental funding.¹⁷ In 1967, Arne Remlov wrote in a *Bonytt* editorial that this was no great loss for Norwegian design. The contributions to the *Triennale* had probably not been worth the considerable costs, he argued, "so rather good bye Milan".¹⁸

Times were changing in Milan as well—the *XIV Triennale*, scheduled for the summer/autumn of 1968 was blocked by radical demonstrators occupying the Palazzo del'Arte, proclaiming "*La Triennale é morta*" and protesting against bourgeois material culture and design's failure to cope with the "real problems" of the global society under banners like "Make Love—not Design".¹⁹ In order to fully appreciate the symbolic significance of this action, we must recall how the *Triennale di Milano* during the 1950s became the most important international showcase for *bel design*—the Swedish design historian Kerstin Wickman even dubbed them "Design Olympics".²⁰ On the 8th of June 1968, after nine days of occupation, the police raided the premises. The exhibition never opened.²¹

Like Remlov, the Swedish art historian and critic Ulf Hård af Segerstad too proclaimed that the *Triennale di Milano* had become *passé*. In his review of the 1967 world exhibition *Expo 67* in Montreal, he deemed the Norwegian section to be "the most correct of the Scandinavian" sections and claimed that he had "never seen such a good Norwegian exhibition", but stated at the same time that the Scandinavian design community

in our provincial isolation is not quite as influential as we like to believe. We have come with our formerly so celebrated triennale philosophy to a context where it definitively does

15. Harriet Clayhills, *33 brukskunstnere / 33 Norwegian designers* (Oslo: Bonytt Forlag, 1959)

16. Arne Remlov, "Norsk brukskunst på strøket i New York" in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 117. Four years later, Georg Jensen Inc. staged an exhibition of Nordic table arrangements, including a Norwegian section designed by Tormod Alnæs: Harriet Clayhills, "Norsk i New York" in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 252

17. Minutes from ID-gruppen's meetings 1964. NID archives

18. Arne Remlov, "Fra Milano til Skandinavia" in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpagged [editorial in No. 10] ("så heller farvel Milano")

19. Liv Schjødt, "Triennalen slått i svime" in *nye bonytt* No. 7, 1968, p 4 and N.N., "Make love—not design" in *Werk und Zeit* Vol. 17, No. 9, 1968, p 1

20. Kerstin Wickman, "Design Olympics—the Milan Triennials" in Widar Halén and Kerstin Wickman (eds.), *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003) p 33-45

21. Anty Pansera, *Storia e cronaca della Triennale* (Milano: Longanesi, 1978) p 105-114

not belong. “Man and her world” in the ungracious year 1967 demand more from us.²²

The refined elegance largely responsible for the international reputation of Scandinavian design in the 1950s had become a strait jacket, Segerstad seemed to argue. The radically changing social, cultural, economic and political world of the late 1960s demanded something completely different of design.

Segerstad’s criticism, soliciting a design much more in touch with the challenges of the “real” world, does seem pertinent to the Norwegian section at *Expo 67*. In spirit, it resembled more Arne Korsmo’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* at the 1954 *X Triennale di Milano* than the “problem solving” mentality which in the late 1960s was developing in the Norwegian industrial design community. The exhibition in Canada showed mostly craft products of a rather exclusive nature, such as work from J. Tostrup in enamel and silver designed by Grete Prytz Korsmo, Hadeland glass sculptures designed by Arne Jon Jutrem, hand-woven wall hangings by Aase Frogner and Brit Fuglevåg Warsinski, wicker work by Inger Ruden Andersen and Gunhild Myhre, wood work by Arne Lindaas and jewellery by Gine Sommerfelt, Tone Vigeland and Regina and Frank Juhl.²³

Even the furniture was specially commissioned for the occasion: The exhibition architect Otto Torgersen had asked Arne Jon Jutrem to design “a group of seats which were to have purely decorative qualities”. Jutrem, in collaboration with his fellow designers Tormod Alnæs and Johan Flåten, contacted the manufacturer Fjellhammer Bruk, the glazier G.A. Larsen and the National Institute of Technology (Statens Teknologiske Institutt—STI) in order to tailor-make these seats in bent plexiglass with steel rod support structures.²⁴ [Figure 16-2] They definitively represented a new formal language and use of material in Norwegian furniture design, but were never mass-produced and their only mission was to decorate one space for a brief period of time. The utter aestheticism of the Norwegian section at the *Expo 67* shows that the applied art community’s lingering desire for international fame was still largely based on artistic ambition—not economic, social or political objectives.²⁵

The last major joint venture project promoting Nordic design abroad would be an exhibition entitled *Design in Scandinavia* touring Australia from February 1968 to January 1969.²⁶ As we have seen, the term, concept and era of “Scandinavian Design” was closely related to mutual exhibition activity. It was first conceptualised at the two minor exhibitions *Scandinavian Design for Living* and *Scandinavia at Table* in London in 1951, gained momentum through the first *Design in Scandinavia* which toured North-

22. Ulf Hård af Segerstad, “EXPO 67: Skandinavien og den elektroniske labyrinten” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 239 (“vi i vår provinsiella isolering inte är riktigt så betydande, som vi gärna vill tro. Vi har kommit med vår tidigare så omskrivna triennale-filosofi till ett sammanhang, där den definitivt inte hör hemma. “Människan och hennes värld” i onådans år 1967 kräver mer av oss.”)

23. Liv Schjødt, “Norsk brukskunst på verdensutstillingen i Montreal” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 121-123

24. *Ibid.* p 121 (“en sittegruppe som skulle ha rent dekorativt [sic] egenskaper”)

25. Although Arne Remlov criticised the Norwegian contribution to *EXPO 67* for being a waste of money. The considerable governmental funding—NOK 6 million—spent on one event which he claimed was unlikely to promote sales and boost export would have been much better spent as contributions to the various design organizations, Remlov argued: Arne Remlov, “Et P.R.-styre med myndighet!” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpagged [app.]

26. Ulf Hård af Segerstad, *et al.* (eds.) *Design in Scandinavia* (Stockholm: Victor Pettersons Bokindustri AB, 1968)



Figure 16–2: Seats for the Norwegian section at *Expo 67* in Montreal (plexiglass and steel rod) Fjellhammer Bruk and G.A. Larsen (one-off), 1967. Design: Arne Jon Jutrem, Tormod Alnæs and Johan Flåten. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 27, 1967)

America from 1954 to 1957 and the *IX-XII Triennale di Milano*. The phenomenon “Scandinavian Design”, which constituted the design community’s version of the more general spirit of pan-Scandinavianism, lost some of its endorsement, primacy and consensus during the 1960s, and the second *Design in Scandinavia* in 1968 could thus be interpreted as symbolizing the end of an era.

The Australian exhibition was organized by the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) and its sister organizations in Finland, Denmark and Sweden. As usual, the National Federation complained about insufficient governmental funding and commercial sponsoring, but managed to help get the show on the road. The exhibition was made up of 400 objects, 100 from each country. It is interesting to note that the Norwegian products were selected

primarily based on the wish-list made by the exhibition architect, the Finn Antti Nurmesniemi, after a visit in Norway. From this, one then chose exclusively artefacts which were either awarded the Norwegian Design Centre mark [of design excellence] or approved by the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art's permanent jury.²⁷

It is quite remarkable that the National Federation on such an occasion let the Finnish exhibition architect subject Norwegian design to censorship by allowing him to pre-select the Norwegian contribution.²⁸ The selected products and the their structuring in the exhibition very much recalled the first *Design in Scandinavia* 13 years earlier. The show included only products intended for the domestic sphere, handmade artefacts proliferated and were still portrayed as design rather than as handicraft, and the exhibition catalogue structured the objects in the conventional manner—"ceramics", "furniture", "glass", "jewellery, silver, enamel", "lighting fixtures", "metal", "miscellaneous", "plastics" and "textiles".²⁹ But what in the early 1950s might have had at least a hint of social vocation appeared utterly conservative, high-brow and bourgeois in the late 1960s. The strategy of keeping design promotion within the cultural sphere had clearly favoured the refined over the radical. It was thus not only the name of this 1968 event that connoted to 1954—the entire concept started to seem a bit out of date.

16.3 Insisting on the artistic aspects of design

As demonstrated above, neither the industrial designers nor the craftsmen were content with the term applied art (*brukskunst*) as a universal common denominator for their work. As a somewhat banal simplification, we might say that industrial designers looked with envy towards engineers and craftsmen looked with envy towards artists. Hence, holding the applied art community together became an increasingly difficult task—even for the most persistent and ideologically tuned of missionaries. Efforts were not in short supply, though, and what seems to have been the most frequently applied strategy in the struggle to create a common ground was the insistence that all types of design activity—from the most art-like studio handicraft to the most engineering-like industrial design—contained artistic aspects at their core.

Odd Brochmann pondered a lot on these topics, trying to come to grips with what it was that constituted the core characteristics of applied art. What should be included and what should be excluded from the domain? In a tentatively pedagogic and commonsensical wording he explained:

27. Jørgen Skaare interviewed in N.N., "Landsforbundet tok chansen" in *nye bonytt* No. 2, 1968, p 30 ("I første rekke tok vi hensyn til den ønskelisten utstillingens arkitekt, finnen Antti Nurmesniemi, satte opp etter et besøk i Norge. Ut fra den igjen valgte man så utelukkende gjenstander som enten var belønnet med Norsk Designcentrums merke eller som var godkjent av Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunsts faste jury.")

28. One should bear in mind here that Finnish exhibition design had since the early 1950s built quite an international reputation, and was regarded with awe and respect in the Norwegian design community. This fact may have influenced the National Federation's genuflection to Nurmesniemi.

29. Segerstad, *et al.* (eds.) *op.cit.* (unpaged)

Even if we took up the matter-of-fact attitude of considering all utensils as tools, tools for increased efficiency and comfort, we would soon have to realise that it is but a limited part of them whose form completely derives from their purpose. As the case is with axes, monkey wrenches and lathes. Such tools may in certain cases seem very beautiful to us, primarily when the function is evident, and in addition they have something dear and familiar about them. A pair of fine skis is a good example, thanks to their meaningful and correct appearance. Here it must be possible to talk about a *utilitarian beauty* [*bruks-skjønnhet*], whereas the term applied art [*brukskunst*] does not immediately apply, because that presupposes a value in addition to those mentioned, something additionally interpretative.

The shape of a coffee cup is also predominantly determined by its function, but at the same time we know that there are literally infinite possibilities of varying this shape without noticeably impairing the function... [M]ost people will prefer the cup whose shape seems *beautiful*... In the most superb versions, this beauty conveys something unutterable, something which it is not quite possible to grasp with words and explanations. That is when art has joined in.³⁰

The ideology which Brochmann represents here, is in my view the most clear-cut version of the applied art ideals. A designer—of any conviction—was an applied artist because his job was to create not only functional form, but add art to the project as well. The unpretentious or unintended beauty which even an artisan or an engineer could strike upon from time to time—like that in a pair of skis or a monkey wrench—would not do. Thus, according to Brochmann, the essence of design was the artistic “addition to the utilitarian forms”.³¹

Despite the fact that Jens von der Lippe asserted, as shown above, that “the handicraft must become the direct opposite of the industry” and that its future could only be secured by cultivating “the artistic-aesthetic elements of the handicraft”, he still fell back on his old universalist convictions of from time to time.³² When he—being a studio ceramist—went to Copenhagen to study the achievements of the Royal Porcelain Factory, he explained his admiration for this large scale enterprise with a traditional holistic attitude:

It is not at all a question of small or large, of handicraft or industry. All things, the small studio as well as the large factory are instruments in the hand of the productively creative individual.³³

30. Odd Brochmann, “Brukskunstneren—eller ridderen av den utydelige skikkelse” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 25 (“Selv om vi inntar det nøkterne standpunkt å betrakte alle bruksting som verktøy, verktøy til øket effektivitet og komfort, vil vi fort måtte innse at det bare er en begrenset del av dem hvis form helt ut springer frem av formålet. Slik som tilfellet er med økser, skiftenøkler og dreiebenker. Denslags verktøy kan i visse tilfelle forekomme oss meget vakre, fortrinnsvis når funksjonen er åpenbar og dertil har noe kjært og velkjent ved seg. Et par gode ski er et bra eksempel, takket være deres meningsfylte og korrekte utseende. Vi må her kunne snakke om en *bruks-skjønnhet*, mens begrepet *brukskunst* ikke umiddelbart kommer inn i bildet, det forutsetter en verdi i tillegg til de nevnte, noe ytterligere fortolkende. Formen på en kaffekopp er også i hovedsak bestemt av dens funksjon, men samtidig vet vi at det bokstavelig talt gis uendelig muligheter for å variere denne form, uten at funksjonen blir nevneverdig svekket... [V]il de fleste foretrekke den kopp hvis form synes *vakker*... Dette vakre rommer i de ypperste utgaver noe uutsigelig, noe som det ikke helt er mulig å få tak i ved ord og forklaringer. Da har kunsten kommet med.”)

31. *Ibid.* (“tilskudd til nytteformene”)

32. Jens von der Lippe, “Mønstring av brukskunst høsten 1961” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 17 (“kunsthåndverket må komme til å stå som industriens motsetning... de kunstnerisk-estetiske elementer i kunsthåndverket”)

The interesting thing about this relapse into universalism is that now, it was no longer the endeavour to produce *more beautiful everyday goods* (*vackrare vardagsvara*) that should make up the unifying bonds between handicraft and industry, but the artistic potential and ambition. Thus, artistic values were not only regarded as the unifying factor of handicraft and industrial design, but also given absolute primacy—the factory and the industrial company were reduced to instruments whose only job was to serve the artistic forces. The painter and director of the National Federation, Jørgen Skaare, went further still in his description of the industrial designer:

[T]here [is] today a new type of artist, who has become familiar with the machine, and creates his works of art from the drawing-board. He virtually conducts his machine in an artistic performance.³⁴

Although the artistic aspects according to both Brochmann, von der Lippe and Skaare should constitute the common ground of applied art, regardless of manufacturing methods, Brochmann felt the need to warn against the dangers of arty excesses and kitsch extravaganza on the industrial design side of applied art: “We have... learned to understand that mass-production can only be used to launch art of a distinctly anonymous character.”³⁵ Hence he implied that the artistic aspects of handicraft and industrial design were different in scale but not in essence.

Jens von der Lippe revealed a similar disposition when he applauded the manufacturers’ recent tendency of profiling designers for promotional purposes, giving them the artist-like aura of *author*. But, much like Brochmann, he cautioned against the potentially harmful consequences of excessive worshipping of the designer, such as self-exaltation, mannerism and ‘fashionism’.³⁶ Still, good design could never be reduced to logical principles and utilitarianism. The architect, designer, painter and professor Arne E. Holm was glad to see that designers now were

searching for something which in addition to considering the materially functional also contains another aspect, which we perhaps can characterize as a consideration of human emotions[.]³⁷

And since, in his opinion, most innovation happened “in the formal sphere”, Holm here implied that this “consideration of human emotions” was primarily of an aesthetic nature and thus it was indeed artistic aspects which constituted the *je ne sais quoi* of design. Yet,

33. Jens von der Lippe, “Kongelig porselen, stengods og ungdommelig fajanse” in *Bonytt* Vol. 23, 1963, p 169 (“Det er overhodet ikke spørsmål om smått eller stort, om håndverk eller industri. Altsammen, det lille verksted som den store fabrikk er instrumenter i hånden på det produktivt skapende individ.”)

34. Jørgen Skaare interviewed in Liv Schjødt, “Om grenselandet kunst/brukskunst” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 3 (“der i dag er en ny kunstertype, som er blitt fortrolig med maskinen, og fra tegnebrettet skaper sine kunstverk. Så og si dirigerer sin maskin til kunstnerisk ydelse.”)

35. Brochmann, *op.cit.* p 27 (“Vi har... lært å forstå at masseproduksjonen kun kan brukes til å lansere kunst av utpreget anonym karakter.”)

36. Jens von der Lippe, “Mønstring av brukskunst høsten 1961” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 17

37. Arne E. Holm, “Spøk med alvor—eller noen tanker i forbindelse med en utstilling av radikal form” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 96 (“leter seg frem mot noe, som samtidig tar hensyn til det materielt funksjonelle og også inneholder et annen moment, som vi kanskje kan karakterisere ved at det tar hensyn til menneskelige følelser”)

echoing Brochmann and von der Lippe, he found “reason to warn against applied art becoming artificial.”³⁸

The industrial designer Tias Eckhoff also made use of the tool-metaphor, but in his application it suggested a conceptual category where the aesthetic value promoted by most modernist designers, namely that of simplicity,³⁹ spurred positive connotations of efficiency and performance rather than boredom and poverty. In an interview in the occasion of the new stainless steel cutlery *Maya* he had designed for Norsk Stålpres A/S, Eckhoff proclaimed that

it is more rewarding to design cutlery, seeing that the public is more receptive of simplicity regarding it. Perhaps it falls into the category “tools” in people’s consciousness, especially when it comes to stainless steel.⁴⁰

Hence, to Eckhoff it was a relief to design products where the public was inclined to accept his aesthetic preferences over their own. Similarly, the designer Hermann Bongard—presenting the *Taffel* cutlery in silver produced by Oslo Sølvsververksted A/S—admitted that

As a designer one has the ambition to get the public to accept a new, beautiful simplicity, but one realizes that the first step must not be too audacious. Then no one is won over.⁴¹

The simplicity championed by the industrial designers could thus be seen as the artistic aspect—although “of a distinctly anonymous character”—which Odd Brochmann had defined as the *sine qua non* of all design activity. Arne Jon Jutrem, who worked both as artist, craftsman and industrial designer, went further still when it came to explicitly claiming primacy for the artistic aspects of design—although he retained a demarcation between fine art and industrial design:

One shall not lay bare one’s soul on the drawing-board in the design office, but one must deploy the artistic education one might have to give the anonymous things appropriate forms and colours... These things must make our existence less, not more, complicated. And because they mean so much, it is *important* that the artist enters the craftsmen’s workshop and industry’s production halls.⁴²

38. *Ibid.* (“på formens område... grunn til å advare mot at brukskunsten skal bli kunstig.”)

39. For a history of the idea of simplicity as a primary virtue in modern design, see: Paul Greenhalgh, *The Modern Ideal—The Rise and Collapse of Idealism in the Visual Arts* (London: V&A Publications, 2005) p 143-228

40. Tias Eckhoff interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Tias Eckhoff og spisebestikken” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 1 (“det er mere takknemlig å tegne bestikk, eftersom publikum er mere mottagelig for enkelhet når det gjelder dem. De faller kanskje inn under kategorien “redskap” i folks bevissthet, særlig når det er spørsmål om rustfritt stål.”)

41. Hermann Bongard interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Et skritt fremover” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 111 (“Man har jo som designer den ambisjon å få publikum til å godta en ny, vakker enkelthet, men man innser at det første skritt ikke må være for dristige. [sic] Da får man ingen med seg.”)

42. Arne Jon Jutrem interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Arne-Jon Jutrem har ordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 56 (“Man skal ikke brette ut sjelen på tegnebrettet på designkontoret, men man skal bruke den kunstneriske skoloring man måtte ha til å gi de anonyme ting riktige former og farver... Disse ting må gjøre tilværelsen mindre, ikke mer, komplisert for oss. Og fordi de betyr så mye, er det *viktig* at kunstneren trer inn i håndverkernes verksteder og industriens produksjonshaller.” [italics substituted for dilated text in the original])

Although Jutrem's view on the primacy of artistic aspects in the design process was slightly toned down compared with what we have seen his successor as director of the National Federation Jørgen Skaare proclaimed, the two agreed completely that it was the artistic expertise which constituted the designer's *raison d'être*. Jutrem saw the designer as an artist who intervened in the product development process, improving products by way of his *bel-esprit*. As such, the difference between fine art and industrial design was by Jutrem considered to be one of scale, not essence.

Even actors representing the manufacturers stressed the importance of the artistic aspects of design—albeit in more moderate modes of expression. For instance, the economist Alf Midtbust—director of the National Federation of Furniture Manufacturers (Møbelprodusentenes Landsforbund)—wrote that “even modern design should make a certain allowance for artistic liberality.”⁴³

For the applied art community, the insistence on the aesthetic and artistic aspect of design was not limited to their usual sphere of product types and industries. When *Bonytt* enthusiastically presented the new design award established by the Norwegian Export Council (Norges Eksportråd) and the Federation of Norwegian Industries (Norges Industriforbund) after an initiative by the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) and introduced the first edition's (1961) five award-winning products, Arne Remlov felt the need to “art up” the rather mundane objects:⁴⁴

The Trio Fabrikker door-handle designed by Bjørn A. Larsen received the following description: “The jury's comments reads: ‘Firm, simple form with good grip’. We want to add that it is beautiful”. Faced with the Sandnes Aducerverk grapnel designed by Kåre Espedal, Remlov declared that even “something as prosaic as a grapnel can by an industrial designer or draughtsman be turned into a little masterpiece.” His closing remark to the K. Pettersens Sønner refrigerator designed by Thor Jacobsen was simply “It is beautiful.”⁴⁵ [Figure 16-3] While the jury—composed of three industrial designers and two industry representatives—certainly commented on “good form” aspects of the

43. Alf Midtbust, “‘Scandinavian Design’—the Pattern of a local Civilization” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 66

44. Remlov's Danish colleague Svend Erik Møller detested this tendency in the applied art community of “highlight[ing] these thoroughly mundane utensils [tennis rackets, high-voltage insulators, pliers and shovels] as particularly beautiful—yes, if not explicitly, we have almost said that they were art. This is of course pure nonsense... We place a designed nail file in a glass case at...[an] exhibition... and it is expected that we stand there, shivering with artistic experience, looking at this nail file. Before, one regarded one's tools as tools and not as works of art. A tool like a nail file or a soup pot is not applied art [*brugskunst*] and shall not be applied art—it shall be pieces of engineering”: Svend Erik Møller, “Den nødvendige unødvendighet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 210 (“fremhevet disse ganske dagligdags brugsting som særlig smukke—ja, om ikke direkte, så har vi nesten sagt, at de var kunst. Det er naturligvis det rene vrøvl... Vi lægger en designet neglefil i en glasmontre på... udstilling... og det forventes, at vi står gysende af kunstnerik [sic] oplevelse og kigger på denne neglefil. Tidligere betragtede man sit værktøj som værktøj og ikke som kunstværker. Et stykke værktøj som en neglefil eller en suppegyrde er ikke brugskunst og skal ikke være brugskunst—det skal være ingeniørarbejder”) Møller's thundering speech (originally presented at a design conference organized in connection with the opening of the exhibition *Yong Nordic desingers (Unga Nordiska formgivare)* in May 1962 at Röhsska museet in Gothenburg) was repudiated by Odd Brochmann who, in support of Remlov's position on these matters, insisted that even the design of high-voltage insulators could represent artistic value: Odd Brochmann, “I ungdommens tegn” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 212-213

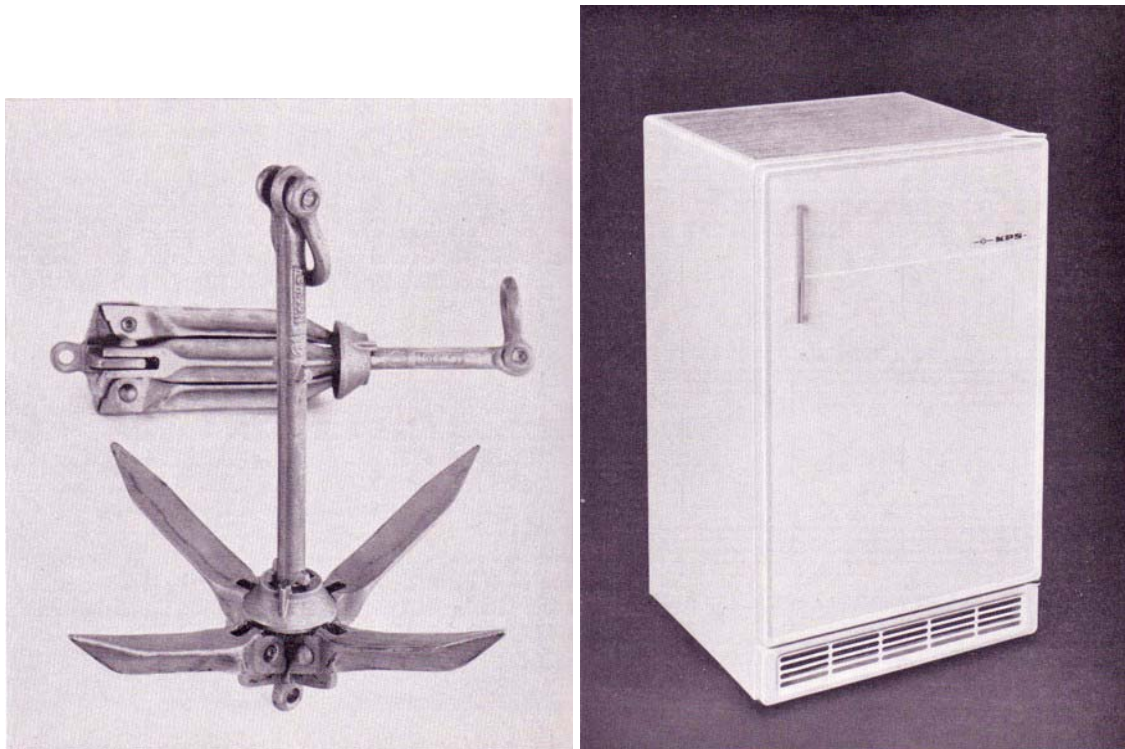


Figure 16–3: Two of the five products which received the first edition of the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) for 1961. Left: Grapnel SAV (malleable cast iron) Sandnes Aducerverk A/S, 1957. Designer: Kåre Espedal. Right: Refrigerator (enamelled steel and polystyrene) K. Petersens Sønner A/S, 1961. Designer: Thor Jacobsen. When presented in *Bonytt* in 1962, Arne Remlov described the grapnel as a “masterpiece” and the refrigerator as “beautiful” and thus “art-ing up” these quite mundane examples of industrial design. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 21, 1961)

products, Remlov’s remarks were much more explicitly alluding to aesthetic or artistic values.⁴⁶

Still, however clumsy some of these comments may seem, publishing a picture of a grapnel does suggest that the applied art community, manifested by *Bonytt* and the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), did try to respond at least partially to the challenges from the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)). As discussed above, Thorbjørn Rygh accused the applied art movement of not understanding that designing for mass-production posed specific requirements, and that they ignored large parts of the industrial designers’ sphere of activity because much of it fell outside the

45. Arne Remlov, “Designerens ansvar” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 114-115 (“Juryens bemerkninger lyder slik: ‘Stram, enkel form med godt grep’. Vi vil føye til at den er vakker... Noe så prosaisk som en dregg kan av en designer eller tegner for industrien gjøres til et lite mesterverk... Det er vakkert.”) The other two awarded products were of more familiar types to Remlov and *Bonytt*: The Norsk Stålpress stainless steel cutlery *Maya* designed by Tias Eckhoff and a Vinmonopolet/Moss Glasværk series of Curacao bottles and labels designed by Kjell Dahl: Alf Bøe, *Den norske Designpris de syv første år / The Norwegian Design Award its first seven years* (Oslo: Norsk Designcentrum, 1969) p 41

46. The jury members were: Thorbjørn Rygh, Birger Dahl, Sigvard Bernadotte, Jacob Aall and Rolf Stranger: Bøe, *op.cit.* p 40

traditional limits of the applied art community.⁴⁷ But, as the example of the rather “artificial” *Bonytt* presentation of the products receiving the new Norwegian design award should indicate, the attempts at responding to the critique were perhaps not always right on the mark.

A substantial part of the products deemed “good design” by the industrial design community were designed by people with no formal design education in the traditional sense—they were largely technicians or engineers, and more often than not held permanent positions in a manufacturing company. As we have seen, this was the case both at the 1963 exhibition *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo), and regarding the winners of the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris)—like e.g. the grapple discussed above. When the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) started its exhibition activity in 1965, this tendency became perhaps even more apparent.⁴⁸ Considering Arne Remlov’s awkward and rather uneasy dealing with the grapple and other such artless or “de-artified” products, his criticism of the Norwegian Design Centre’s practice was hardly surprising, claiming that they

by no means exhibit design in the internationally acknowledged meaning of the term, i.e. industrial goods where a trained designer has co-operated on the design. Far too many of the centre’s exhibited products fall completely outside the field of “design”—it can not even be saved by Mr. Own Design who appears in abundance. Him we know.⁴⁹

That products developed by in-house teams of (anonymous) people with no aesthetic education were considered excellent examples of industrial design severely provoked Remlov.⁵⁰ It is interesting to note, though, that he did not criticize the products in question for being inferior or of poor design. Hence, his frustration with “Mr. Own Design” most probably originated in a deeply rooted attitude very common in the applied art community—the understanding of the designer as an artist, an *author*.⁵¹ [Figure 16-4]

47. Thorbjørn Rygh, “Industrial Design—i Norge” in *Byggekunst* No. 2, 1961, p 37

48. So-called “anonymous” design—a concept which often coincide with engineering design—has since long fascinated design elites worldwide, and provoked ambivalent attitudes when measured against the conventional art-technology dichotomy. Some of the most intriguing examples of what might be called the “aesthetization of mechanization” can be found in the writings of Lewis Mumford and Sigfried Giedion: Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1934) and Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1948). Nowhere were the “aesthetization of mechanization” so explicit as in the 1934 exhibition *Machine Art* at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. As the curator, Philip Johnson, wrote in the catalogue: “There are no purely ornamental objects [exhibited]; the useful objects were, however, chosen for their aesthetic quality. Some will claim that usefulness is more important than beauty, or that usefulness makes an object beautiful. This exhibition has been assembled from the point of view that though usefulness is an essential, appearance has at least as great a value.”: Philip Johnson (ed.), *Machine Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1934) unpagged. The eclecticism and aestheticism MoMA displayed in its dealing with “anonymous” design must, as Terry Smith has argued, be understood in light of the museum’s self-proclaimed “custodianship of the transcendent values of Modern art.”: Terry Smith, *Making The Modern—Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) p 395

49. Arne Remlov, “Merker og priser for design” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 20 (“aldeles ikke utstiller design i den internasjonalt aksepterte betydningen av begrepet, dvs. industrivarer hvor en utdannet formgiver har samarbeidet om utformingen. Alt for [sic] mange av centrets utstilte varer faller helt utenfor “design”-området—det kan ikke engang reddes av hr. Egen Design som opptrer i store mengder. Ham kjenner vi.”)

Bonytt co-editor Liv Schjødt supported Remlov's view on the matter, claiming that the Norwegian Design Centre exhibited "the industry's products without design—many, and with design—few". So, not only did many of these products fall outside the boundaries of applied art, but they did not even qualify as industrial design. Still, she appreciated the aesthetic quality of some of these "designless" products, e.g. a propeller. According to Schjødt, this product was "designed by calculations in an electronic computer", seemingly implying that the development of such products required no conscious intellectual or creative endeavour.⁵² Hence, art-like qualities in the appearance of industrial goods did not make them industrial design. Such a classification required art-like qualities in the product development process as well.

It is tempting to interpret this curious rationale as a strategy to preserve the confines of the traditional applied art community's understanding of design as something intrinsically artistic. When the old strategy of insisting on including only beautiful industrial goods in the design domain seemed to fail, it proved necessary to devise a mechanism excluding products which were beautiful by "accident", "nature" or "destiny" rather than as the result of an art-like design process led by an artist-like designer.

In a somewhat more closely considered and thought-through attempt, Arne Remlov and Liv Schjødt simply asked themselves: "Can all this, the handicraft and the beautifully and appropriately formed industrial product be put in one big bag: applied art?"⁵³ They argued that since the Norwegian term for applied art, *brukskunst*, was a fabrication from the start and thus had never had a precise definition, it could very well be stretched and adapted to accommodate new elements in a new situation. Nevertheless, in a manoeuvre implying that this term was becoming too generic, they went on to suggest that the primary level term applied art be divided into two secondary level specifying terms: 'handicraft' and 'industrial design'.⁵⁴

50. Here it might be interesting to refer to a contrasting event in Italy a few years later: In 1972, the highly celebrated graphic designer Bruno Munari proposed to honour generic designs such as the deck chair, the umbrella and the tripod music stand by awarding them a "Compasso d'Oro to Unknown". His proposal was never acted upon, but it is intriguing that such a proposal was launched in the country in which the personality cult of individual designers probably have been most the passionate and comprehensive: Bruno Munari, "Compasso d'Oro a Ignoti" in *Ottogono* No. 26, 1972, p 92-94

51. This attitude has a long tradition within design communities. The German/British design historian Stefan Muthesius has shown how the very same desire to identify the individual *author* designer of any given ("good"/interesting) product was proffered in 19th century Britain—e.g. through a 1881 piece from the architectural journal *The Builder* which is remarkably similar in tone and argumentation to Remlov's clamour 85 years later: "We see a good design, and we are told it is by 'Messrs.-&Co.'. We do not understand what is meant by a 'company' designing. Artistic design is an individual act. We want to know the name of the man who did the thing, and not the name of the people who paid him to do the thing under their name.": Quoted in: Stefan Muthesius, "We Do Not Understand What Is Meant by a "Company" Designing": Design versus Commerce in Late Nineteenth-Century English Furnishing" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1992, p 115

52. Liv Schjødt, "Fra forvirringens verden" in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 92 ("industriens produkter uten design—mange, og med design—få... utformet etter beregninger i en elektronisk regnemaskin")

53. Arne Remlov and Liv Schjødt, "Kunsthåndverk—Industriell formgivning" in *Bonytt* Vol. 23, 1963, p 253 ("Kan man putte alt dette, kunsthåndverket og den vakkert og hensiktsmessige formete industrivaren i en stor sekk: brukskunsten?")

54. *Ibid.*

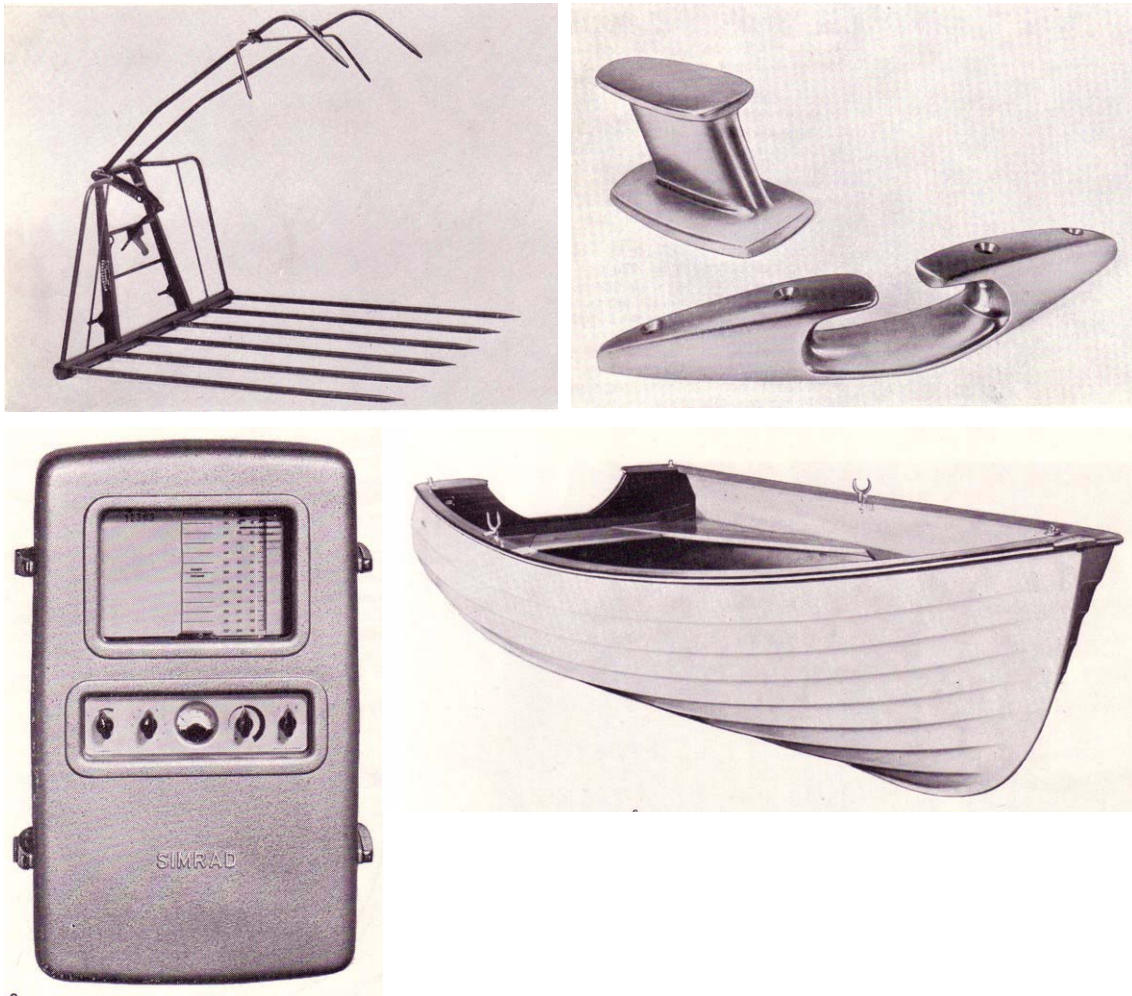


Figure 16–4: Four of the five products awarded the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) for 1964: Top left: Hay loader (steel) Kvernelands Fabrikk A/S. Design: Olav Njå. Top right: Hawsehole and bollards (light metal alloy) Herholdt Andersen. Design: Kokko Herholdt. Bottom left: Echo sounder (silumin (silicon-aluminium alloy)) Simrad Simonsen Radio A/S. Design: Gunnar Thams Bjerved and Simrad design team. Bottom right: Dinghy *With 400* (glass-fibre armed polyester) Kristiansand Mekaniske Verksted A/S. Design: Bror With. These are examples of design done by engineers and praised by the industrial designers but not recognized by the more conventional groups of the applied art community. Arne Remlov, for instance, did not care for “mr. Own Design” at all since this unostentatious and rather anonymous figure tampered with Remlov’s insistence on the primacy of the artistic aspects of industrial design. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 26, 1966)

It is interesting to note, though, that Remlov and Schjødt only could accept industrial products as belonging to the field of applied art if they were beautiful. A merely appropriate design would not do. No such specification was made regarding handicraft. It thus seems as though the *Bonytt* editors considered handicraft to have sufficient aesthetic or artistic values by default, whereas only some industrial products possessed this primal virtue. Alf Bøe made the same discrimination in a *Bonytt* article in tribute to the tenth anniversary of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in 1965. To him, applied art included any kind

of handicraft product, “say, an embroidery or a manually turned jar” and he made no mention of any standards, qualities or aspirations to which the handicraft product had to conform in order to be deemed a work of applied art. The other extreme of the field, on the other hand, was made up by “mass-produced goods *with aesthetic pretensions*” (my italics)—and Bøe quickly added that “yes, a tractor may have an aesthetic attitude [sic!] making it applied art as good as any.”⁵⁵ So, according to Bøe, highly prosaic products—his article was illustrated by e.g. a Brødrene Søyland *Brøyt X3* excavator designed by Thorbjørn Rygh, the Westwitco *Rottefella* ski binding designed by Bror With and some Svein Strømberg & Co fishing-line pails—could be considered industrial design and thus by implication also applied art, but only if they had aesthetic pretensions and attitudes. [Figure 16-5]



Figure 16–5: Excavator *Brøyt X3* (Steel, *et al.*) Brødrene Søyland A/S, 1964. Designer: Thorbjørn Rygh. According to Alf Bøe, a product which had aesthetic pretensions and attitudes making it a work of applied art. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 25, 1965)

This line of argument seems to indicate a rather peculiar definition of design: design is what designers do.⁵⁶ In other words: a mere tautology. When the brothers Ingebret and Kristian Søyland, a carpenter and a mechanic respectively, began manufacturing hydraulically powered excavators in 1956, they probably did not think of their products as possessing aesthetic pretensions and attitudes.⁵⁷ I also doubt that Alf Bøe would have used this characteristic about the first two versions (*Brøyt XI & X2*) designed by the

55. Alf Bøe, “Fra broderi til gravemaskin” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 103 (“la oss si et broderi eller en hånddreiet krukke... serieproduserte masseartikler med estetiske pretensjoner... ja, en traktor kan ha en estetisk holdning som gjør den til brukskunst god nok”)

brothers themselves—it seems to have been easier to ascribe aesthetic pretensions and attitude to the X3 model as it had been designed by an (aesthetically) trained designer.⁵⁸

Liv Schjødt also began lauding what can best be described as modernist formalism. In an ode to the new Rosenthal *Composition* service designed by the Finn Tapio Wirkkala, she proclaimed with no traces of criticism or lament that

Here dishwashing and practical housewife problems have been disregarded in order to create an elegant service conforming to the formal character of our time... The objects are refined and exciting and one appreciates that Rosenthal claim that they have never had such a difficult production process[.]⁵⁹

So, not only had utilitarian concerns been disregarded but even problems regarding manufacturability had been suppressed in order to create the desired form. This was of course not the first time such priorities were made in a product development process, but what is so fascinating here is that Schjødt explicitly stated that making this U-turn on central modernist idioms was completely legitimate, even laudable. A product which was difficult to use and difficult to make could still represent good design, as long as it had an interesting form. The only excuse she bothered to come up with was that she considered this to be a service for festive occasions, something which allegedly made utilitarian and economic concerns less important.⁶⁰

As we have seen, the unity of the applied art movement and community faced serious challenges on several fronts. The increasing “artification” of applied art—the reorientation of studio craft towards the sphere of fine art—was demanding but manageable, since it reinforced rather than dispute the primacy of the artistic aspects. Coping with the inclusion of engineers and their “designless” products in the field of design seemed to pose a far greater threat. This tug-of-war went on throughout the 1960s, and the negotiations for a common ground proved harder and harder. As the decade came to an end, a wilful representative of the applied art community—the

56. As the British design historian Clive Dilnot has observed, this way of defining what design is common among design practitioners, and for a good reason: “This strategy has enormous advantages for designers. It immediately reduces design as a whole to what they are doing at any moment in time.”: Clive Dilnot, “The State of Design History, Part II” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1984, p 3 (note 4). Bøe himself was not a design practitioner, but his definition of design presented here seems to have been heavily influenced by his designer friends in ID-gruppen—after all, the article was written as a tribute to ID-gruppen’s tenth anniversary and the *Brøyt X3* excavator he proposed as what might be called a *boundary object* was designed by ID-gruppen’s president Thorbjørn Rygh. (The concept of boundary objects was coined by the American sociologists of science Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer and signifies objects that can be used to facilitate communication between different social groups and actors whose shared repertoire of experiences and language is unsatisfactory. Boundary objects are both adaptable to different viewpoints and robust enough to maintain identity across them. Bøe’s use of the excavator can be seen as an attempt to establish such a “bridge” between the sometimes disparate worlds of applied art and commercial industry: Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, “Institutional Ecology, ‘Translations’ and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley’s Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39” in *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 19, No. 3., 1989, pp. 387-420. For a brief explanation of the concept, see e.g.: Sergio Sismondo, *An Introduction to Science and Technology Studies* (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) p 148)

57. Lars Gaute Jøssang, *Industrieventyret på Jæren 1800-2000* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2004) p 156-165

58. Although, to Bøe, aesthetic design training was no absolute prerequisite for developing products with “aesthetic pretensions”: the ski binding and the fishing-line pails which illustrated the article as exemplary products were both designed by engineers.

goldsmith Ivar David-Andersen—delivered one of the most indicative and characteristic attempts at delimiting the field of design as a predominantly aesthetic activity.

After having attended a conference on the future role of the designer at the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum), one of the chief propulsive forces in the inclusion of engineers and their “designless” products in the field of design, David-Andersen felt compelled to retort to what he thought to be an erosion of the design sphere. The goldsmith and company manager did not care for the idea of the designer as a universalist, a project manager who mastered every side of the complex product development process. The idea of such a figure was based on wishful thinking, not on realities, he argued: “To be sure, we sometimes hear that Norwegians are a particularly gifted nation [sic], but we can not expect all that many ‘universal geniuses’ to be born every century.”⁶¹ Since we could not count on designers being Renaissance Men, we would be better off preserving the status quo of arts and craft-trained designers contributing to the product development process with their own aesthetic and craft-based expertise—alongside other experts where needed. Not surprisingly, the goldsmith embraced handicraft and industrial art as belonging to the domain of design, but insisted on drawing a distinct line between designer/design and engineer/engineering:

The question is whether a product where aesthetics is not an issue should be part of the aesthetically trained designer’s sphere of activity. And would it not be more natural that the constructor of a revolutionary life raft received the Federation of Norwegian Industries’ Constructor Award, the King’s Order of Merit or other rewards rather than a design award?.. [R]egarding the term designer, I would find it natural also in the future to relate this to a person who designs or shapes artefacts where aesthetic concerns are favoured... On the whole, it is a question whether the artistically trained designer, when it comes to the industry, should be content with functioning as the cultural and aesthetic advisor to the team of experts.⁶²

David-Andersen’s mentioning of a life raft was far from an arbitrary example. Having witnessed products such as a grapnel and a plough receive the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris), we can only suspect that his dismay with this view of design reached a new low when the life raft *Igloo* manufactured by Walter Tangen A/S and designed by Walter Tangen received the award for 1967.⁶³ A typical result of what Arne

59. Liv Schjødt, “Til festbordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 51 (“Her er sett bort fra oppvask- og praktiske husmørproblemer for å skape et elegant servise overensstemmende [sic] med vår tids formpreg. Tingene er raffinerte og spennende og man forstår at Rosenthal hevder at de aldri har hatt en så vanskelig fremstillingsprosess”)

60. *Ibid.* p 50-51

61. Ivar David-Andersen, “Designerens plass i produksjonslivet” in *Norges industri* No. 7, 1969, p 10 (“Riktignok hører vi av og til at nordmenn er en spesielt begavet nasjon [sic], men så svært mange ‘universalbegavelser’ kan vi ikke regne med blir født hvert århundrede.”)

62. *Ibid.* p 11 (“Det er i det hele tatt et spørsmål om et produkt hvor estetikken ikke kommer inn i bildet, bør ligge innenfor den estetisk utdannende designers arbeidsfelt. Og ville det ikke være mer naturlig at konstruktøren av en revolusjonerende redningsflåte fikk Industriforbundets Konstruktørpris, Kongens Fortjenestemedalje eller andre påskjønnelser istedenfor en designpris?.. når det gjelder betegnelsen designer, ville jeg finne det naturlig at man også i fremtiden, forbinder dette med en person som tegner eller utformer gjenstander hvor estetiske hensyn tilgodesees... Det er i det hele tatt et spørsmål om ikke den kunstnerisk utdannede designer, når det gjelder industrien, bør være fornøyd med å virke som spesialistteamets kulturelle og estetiske rådgiver.”)

Remlov three years earlier had scornfully described as “Mr. Own Design”,⁶⁴ the life raft epitomized what David-Andersen considered to be a product devoid of any aesthetic intention, function or value, and thus not belonging to the field of design. The article was illustrated with a picture of the life raft juxtaposed with a silver coffee set manufactured by David-Andersen’s own firm and designed by his own employee, the goldsmith Bjørn Østern.⁶⁵ The didactics of this juxtaposition was of course as evident as it was striking and clever: David-Andersen’s own silver coffee set was design, whereas the to him alien life raft was not.⁶⁶

It is interesting to note that the goldsmith launched his attack on away ground; the article was published in the business weekly *Norges industri*. By addressing the industry and its managers rather than the design community, we can only assume that David-Andersen’s aim was to convince the industry’s decision-makers that design was not just a new and fancy word for product development, but an activity requiring aesthetic expertise. David-Andersen thus gave his full support to the point of view we have seen was maintained by *Bonytt*, but insisted even more explicitly on the primacy of the artistic aspects of design.

16.4 Justifying “the need for cosiness”

Promoting “cosy” effects/products/interiors/homes was a hazardous task in any community fostered on interwar avant-garde modernist rhetoric. But, as designer Arne Jon Jutrem laconically stated in 1967: “There are signs indicating that Man can not live on steel and concrete alone”.⁶⁷ Although the situation was easing up in the 1960s, the need for cosiness still had to be justified by rational arguments. When attempting to restore the honour of perhaps the most traditional of all “cosy” products, the rocking chair, after decades on the scrap heap of immoral design, it was presented as medicine for stress and nerve strain. It was not a place for idle pastime—it was the ideal work tool for “a man developing plans”.⁶⁸

63. Alf Bøe, *Den norske Designpris de syv første år / The Norwegian Design Award its first seven years* (Oslo: Norsk Designcentrum, 1969) p 52-53

64. Arne Remlov, “Merker og priser for design” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 20 (“hr. Egen Design”)

65. David-Andersen, *op.cit.* p 9

66. It is interesting to note that whereas the Norwegian Design Centre here was criticized for a *too wide* understanding of design, far beyond the traditional realm of household goods, NDC’s British role model—Council of Industrial Design—had been criticized for a *too narrow* understanding of design, largely confined to the traditional realm of household goods: Paddy Maguire, “Designs on Reconstruction: British Business, Market Structures and the Role of Design in Post-War Recovery” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1991 p 26

67. Arne Jon Jutrem, “Frodig i glass” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 29 (“Tegn tyder... på at mennesket ikke kan leve på stål og betong alene”)

68. Harriet Clayhills, “Frem for gyngestolen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 64 (“en mann som skal utarbeide planer”) Towards the end of the decade this rationalizing camouflage was not needed anymore, and the rocking chair could be praised for its contribution to cosiness alone: Sonja Schartum, “Til hygge i hus og hytte” in *nye bonytt* No. 3, 1968, p 12-13

However, cosiness was not always passed off as *just* work. In defence of the open fireplace in spaces where it had no utilitarian function to speak of, Arne Remlov made an open confession:

In this connection we completely disregard the utilitarian effect, we think of the cosiness, the possibility for relaxation or the very opposite—intellectual concentration, which the open fire stimulates.⁶⁹

While the cosiness generated by the rocking chair and the fireplace came on the—admittedly flimsy—pretext of rationality, Remlov went even further when he claimed that “we surely need some “useless” elements as well”—but then he recovers by rationalizing even the purely ornamental objects by assuring that they “are useful to us by their cheerful mood.”⁷⁰ Five years later, Remlov had found a way to phrase this attitude using a rhetoric even more compliant with modernist idioms:

[O]ne thing we know for sure, that functionalism also must imply the aspect of well-being. A room or a chair is hardly functionalistic unless even the function of cosiness, well-being, is fulfilled.⁷¹

This wording is fascinating not only because Remlov here introduced the concept of emotional functions in the context of functionalism, but he even put emotional functions on a par with utilitarian functions, acknowledging that the cosiness, nostalgia and sentimental values consumers associated with their objects had to be considered functions on a level with the most rational, tangible and measurable utilitarian function.⁷² The views here expressed by the *Bonytt* editor seem to foreshadow what the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard would write a few years later: “Something that serves no purpose whatsoever may... still serve *us*.”⁷³

69. Arne Remlov, “Hyggen ved peisen” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 93 (“I denne forbindelse ser vi helt bort fra nytteeffekten, vi tenker på den hygge, den mulighet for avslapping eller det stikk motsatte—intellektuell konsentrasjon, som den åpne, levende ild stimulerer.”)

70. Arne Remlov, “Ved inngangen til 1960-årene” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 193 (“vi trenger såvisst noen “unyttige” innslag også... er oss til nytte ved sitt humør.”)

71. Arne Remlov, “Statussymbol eller identitetsbehov” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 124 (“ett vet vi med sikkerhet, at funksjonalisme også skal innebære trivselsmomentet. Et rom eller en stol er neppe funksjonalistiske uten at også funksjonen hygge, trivsel, er tilgodesett.”)

72. In actual consumption and use the sharp dichotomies between the useful and the useless, between utilitarian and emotional functions are, of course, heavily blurred. The Irish anthropologist Pauline Garvey has shown how aesthetic choices regarding consumption and home decoration is often sought justified or rationalized by means of objects’ *potential* (utilitarian) functionality or practicality and thus transforming or translating a “want”-rhetoric into a “need”-rhetoric. One typical example of this strategy is the popularity of using old peasant utilities such as spinning wheels or tools as ornamental objects for the home. Garvey sees this practice as a creative way of conforming to the ideals of modesty and equality she sees as highly characteristic of Norwegian society: Pauline Garvey, “How to Have a ‘Good Home’—The Practical Aesthetic and Normativity in Norway” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2003 p 241-251. Garvey’s arguments regarding the characteristics of Norwegians and Norwegian society is informed by the work of Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad, especially: Marianne Gullestad, *The Art of Social Relations: Essays on Culture, Social Action and Everyday Life in Modern Norway* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1992)

73. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996) p 114

Remlov now seemed to be on a roll: In praise of the merry and exuberant ceramics by the Dane Bjørn Wiinblad, he asserted that “even amusement is a function in life.”⁷⁴ The challenge for designers, then, was to improve their inscription of such emotional functions in modern products in order to prevent consumers from having to resort to kitsch, nostalgia and traditionalesque to get their cosiness-fix.⁷⁵ The American design historian Victor Margolin has offered a theory of why it was so difficult to approach topics such as the emotional functions and meanings of design from within a modernist paradigm:

In the discourse of the modernists, the locus of meaning was twofold: form and function, for which we might substitute the theoretical terms “aesthetics” and “pragmatics.” Early modernist designers believed that meaning was embedded in the object rather than negotiated between the object and a user. Objects were considered to be signs of value with uncontested referents such as clarity, beauty, integrity, simplicity, economy of means, and function. The reductive slogan “form follows function” assumed that use was an explicit, unambiguous term.⁷⁶

The attempts by Remlov and others to incorporate emotional functions into their still rather essentialist understanding of design can be seen as an emerging insight into and acknowledgement of how design achieves meaning through negotiation rather than dictation.

However, Arne Remlov had no ready answer to how to improve the emotional functions in modern design.⁷⁷ Having wrestled with this problem for a long time, he turned more and more towards tradition in search of solutions as the years passed. This is the man who virtually castigated the acclaimed furniture designer Alf Sture in 1950 for “display[ing] reactionary tendencies” and claimed that much of his recent furniture was excessively traditional in form and luxurious in execution.⁷⁸ Now, 16 years later, Remlov hailed Sture as Norway’s greatest furniture designer exactly because he was so

74. Arne Remlov, “Langt fra stagnasjon” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 157 (“moro også er en funksjon i livet.”)

75. The problem here outlined by Remlov has ever since proved to be an arduous one. For a recent elaboration on the subject, see: Donald A. Norman, *Emotional Design—Why we love (or hate) everyday things* (New York: Basic Books, 2004)

76. Victor Margolin, *The Politics of the Artificial—Essays on Design and Design Studies* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002) p 108

77. In contrast, the British architectural/design historian/critic Reyner Banham called in 1960 for analyses of “the history of the product as an interaction between the sources of the symbols and the consumer’s understanding of them.” He thus seems to have proposed semiological product assessment as a method for critics and designers to better understand the symbolic and emotional aspects of products and their use, and consequently also inform the design and manufacture of products with improved symbolic and emotional functions (better *both* for the user’s desires/needs and for the manufacturer’s profit, Banham seems to imply). One must consider, however, that Banham was far more conversant in recent developments in international social theory and far less hostile towards the transitory and “superficial” character of the consumer society than Remlov. This interesting contribution by Banham is pointed out in: Gillian Naylor, “Theory and Design: The Banham Factor: The Ninth Reyner Banham Memorial Lecture” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997 p 247. The quote stems from: Reyner Banham, “A throw-away aesthetic” in Reyner Banham and Penny Sparke (ed.), *Design by Choice* (London: Academy Editions, 1981) p 93 [Originally published as “Industrial design and popular art” in *Industrial Design* in 1960]

78. Arne Remlov, “Utstillingen Rom og rytme” in *Bonytt* Vol. 10, 1950, p 173-177 (“viser reaksjonære tilbøyeligheter.”)

deeply rooted in traditional craft and aesthetics.⁷⁹ Although Remlov had never himself been a docile admirer of Bauhaus, it is still noteworthy that he when interviewing Sture uttered no objections, moderations or comments when the interviewee proclaimed that

The much poetized Bauhaus architect's or designer's ideal is to use the intellect to get through to the fantasy. Not a breath of life can come from this. And it is the Bauhaus spirit that sets the tone in the design of our time. I do not understand this docile admiration for the spirit from the '20-'30s Bauhaus school, I can not see that its forces have created anything so epoch-making.⁸⁰

Both Remlov and Sture had now turned 50, and both of them looked more and more to tradition and history in their writing, interior design and furniture design in order to create emotional functions which they did not believe to succeed in creating within the confines of modernist aesthetics. Their traditionalism rarely ended up as copying or pastiches, but these Grand Old Men in the Norwegian applied art community definitely lost faith in a modernist gospel which to them seemed increasingly dogmatic and rigid.⁸¹ Remlov, at least, had gone a long way from idealistic evangelist to pragmatic agnostic.

In a guest appearance in *Bonytt* Remlov's Danish colleague, the architect and writer Svend Erik Møller made much the same points in a more didactic manner. In a somewhat sarcastic tone he referred to the tedious investigations by domestic science institutes:

[I]n great awe to the researchers who have discovered how the kitchen must be arranged so that the housewife can do with walking 6450 steps a year rather than 9860, we can today allow ourselves to ask: Is it absolutely certain that the housewife becomes happier because she saves 3000 steps a year? Is it absolutely certain that Man's needs are so firmly tied to efficiency and materialistic bliss—or have we perhaps underestimated Man's irrational

79. Arne Remlov, "Bonytt-intervju om fantasi og frihet" in *Bonytt* Vol. 16, 1966, p 129-133

80. *Ibid.* p 131 (Den høyt besugne [sic] Bauhausarkitekts eller designers ideal er å bruke intelligensen for å nå frem til fantasien. Det blir ikke pust av følelse i tingen på det viset. Og det er Bauhausånden som er toneangivende i vår tids design. Jeg forstår ikke denne nesegruse beundringen for 20-30-årenes Bauhaus-skole, jeg kan ikke se at kreftene fra den har skapt noe så epokegjørende.")

81. However, Remlov did not escape accusations to the contrary: One example is when Alf Bøe butchered Remlov's interior design for the new Hotel Norge in Bergen (architect Halfdan Grieg's building, however, was to Bøe's liking). Bøe described the interior of this expensive and in structure and exterior highly modern building as a cacophony of pastiches, period furniture and conventional symbolism. In short; a disgrace. While Bøe—in what seems to be some sort of effort to moderate or divert his butchery—held the owners and employers liable for the deplorable result, Remlov defended both his solutions and his employers by asserting that modern design had not been able to develop formal solutions suitable for festive occasions acceptable to the public. To substantiate this assertion, Remlov pointed to the Astoria—Panton incident: In 1960, the Hotel Astoria in Trondheim had commissioned the radical but at the time relatively unknown Danish architect and designer Verner Panton to design the interiors of the hotel restaurant. The result was astounding in terms of visual effect, but since the guests did not take to it, the entire work was stripped after just some months and a more conventional interior installed. Remlov argued that such incidents naturally scared owners and employers and made them turn to those interior architects who accepted and mastered more conventional and traditional interior styles—like himself: Alf Bøe, "Hotellet til 40 millioner" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 64-68 and Arne Remlov, "Rom til fest—rom til gjest" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 69-71. Another member of the *Bonytt* editorial committee, Håkon Stenstadvold, also criticised Remlov's interior design for Hotel Norge: Håkon Stenstadvold, "Stilfullt og stilløst—eftersom det funksjonelle krever det" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 60-63. For more on the Astoria—Panton incident, see: Thomas Flor, *Mørkets sans—Verner Pantons Astoria restaurant i Trondheim* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum, 2002)

needs for cosiness, for these strange things which can not be measured with pedometers—for the necessary unnecessities.⁸²

For Harriet Clayhills, cosiness could be tolerated, or even applauded, as long as it was “motivated” and “rational”. In her presentation of the Finnish lamp designer Lisa Johansson-Pape, this attitude is clearly expressed: “Now that Mrs. Johansson-Pape fully masters her technique, she allows herself a little addition of festivity and fantasy. But one should notice that it never turns into irrationality.”⁸³ However strange it seems to discriminate between rational and irrational festivity and fantasy, such distinctions were a recurring theme for Clayhills. When she described the designer Birger Dahl’s guiding principle as “*the functional logic*”, she quickly added that despite this strictness, “he believes some of the asceticism can be sacrificed for a certain effect where it is *motivated*.”⁸⁴ Dahl himself said that “the need for cosiness is in itself justified, but the goal is not reached by equipping the lamps as tulips”.⁸⁵

Another example of Harriet Clayhills’ tense and ambiguous attitude towards cosiness can be found in her description of interior designers Gunnvor and Alf Sture’s apartment: It had “nothing of false cosiness, but plenty of true homely snugness.”⁸⁶ A cosy home was thus not just acceptable, but now even commendable and desirable—the trick was to distinguish the true cosiness from the false cosiness.

Jens von der Lippe requested a debate on “the need for cosiness” and suggested a more pro-active strategy from the design community. He claimed that they had lulled themselves into a dream by excessive self-praise, overstating the recent success of modern design. The risk was, von der Lippe warned, that this smugness might delude the design community into forgetting that there still was a world of kitsch out there:

This topic is reluctantly debated in higher circles. As a subject of conversation it is convenient, by all means, and as a target for cold sarcasm. But much too seldom is the picture showing the enormously deep foundation upon which the bargain spirit stands projected into the conversation. A foundation of strong demands, which are not

-
82. Svend Erik Møller, “Den nødvendige unødvendighet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 209 (“i dyp ærbødighet for de forskere, der har fundet ud af, hvordan køkkenet skal indrettes, så husmoderen kan nøjes med at gå 6450 skridt om året i stedet for 9860 må vi have lov i dag at spørge: Er det helt sikkert, at husmoderen bliver lykkeligere, fordi hun sparer 3000 skridt om året? Er det helt sikkert, at menneskets behov er så fast knyttet til effektivitet og materialistisk salighed—eller har vi måske undervurderet menneskets irrationelle behov for trivsel, for disse mærkelige ting, der ikke kan måles med skridttællere—for de nødvendige unødvendigheder.”)
83. Harriet Clayhills, “Glasset lokker—Lisa Johansson-Pape tegner nye finske lamper” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 146 (“Nå når fru Johansson-Pape suverent behersker sin teknikk, tillater hun seg et lite pluss av festlighet og fantasi. Men man skal merke seg at den aldri slår over i usaklighet.”) Similarly, Jørgen Skaare—director of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst)—later hailed Johansson-Pape’s lighting fixtures as “some of the best being made in our time” because they “as element in a room produce, in addition to light, an artistic, decorative character as well”: Jørgen Skaare, “Finsk lys og tekstil” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 191 (“noe av det beste som lages i vår tid... Som element i et rom gir de, foruten lys, også en artistisk, dekorativ karakter.”)
84. Harriet Clayhills, “Vi og våre lamper—intervju med Birger Dahl” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 24 (“den funksjonelle logikken... han synes litt av asketismen kan ofres for en bestemt virkning der den er *motivert*.”)
85. Birger Dahl interviewed in *Ibid.* p 23 (“Behovet for hygge er i og for seg berettiget, men målet nås ikke ved å utstyre lampene som tulipaner”)
86. Harriet Clayhills, “Samtale med Alf Sture” in *Bonytt* Vol. 23, 1963, p 126 (“ingenting av falsk koselighet, men mengder av ekte hjemmehygge.”)

acknowledged in the qualified exclusive circles, for some kind of more, richer, which is compressed into desperate hunger and thirst. And these miserables, these who have only bad or “no taste”, what is it they really do when they seek, and find, the knick-knack which is offered? They suck thumb!⁸⁷

Disregarding for the time being the glaring condescension and arrogance towards the consumers von der Lippe here boasts, his attitudes seem to resemble those of Birger Dahl: tulip lamps were not the answer to the cosiness problem. It was a deplorable fact, according to von der Lippe, that “these miserables, these who have only bad or ‘no taste’” craved the sort of emotional functions he assumed kitsch products to have. The challenge for the design community, then, was to find alternative, more “decent” ways to provide such emotional functions, this “some kind of more, richer” for which the populace had a “desperate hunger and thirst”. He had, however, no ready solution as to how designers were to rise to the challenge posed by “this neglected world-wide misery”.⁸⁸

16.5 The consumer: friend or foe?

When Arne Remlov in a 1996 interview was asked what he thought of the saying “the customer is always right”, he promptly stated: “That is utter nonsense. The customer is usually not right.”⁸⁹ Remlov’s attitude may illustrate a problem which had haunted the more commercially oriented parts of the design community for a long time: how to relate to the public’s or the consumers’ taste. Was the consumer an ignorant irritant who had to be won over because his purchasing power regrettably was a force to be reckoned with? Was he a weak-willed dimwit left at the pray of immoral and/or ignorant marketers, wholesalers and retailers? Was she a rational home economist ready to accept the gospel of modern design? Or perhaps an independent, egoistic status seeker and hedonist?⁹⁰ The points of view that were expressed varied over time, from person to person, and even from argument to argument.⁹¹

Odd Brochmann was one of those who did not quite know what to make of this versatile and ambiguous figure. At one time, he accused the design community of behaving utterly arrogant towards the consumer, considering itself to be high above “the general public wallowing in delusions and perversions down in the swamps”.⁹² Not that he wanted the designers to be completely servile and indulgent—the rapprochement were to take the form of “increased knowledge, i.a. about those one generally shall work

87. Jens von der Lippe, editorial introduction to Ingrid Drage, “Pop-keramikk i Picassos fotspor” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 112 (“Dette fenomen snakkes det nødig om i de gode kretser. Som samtale-emne [sic] er det brukbart, bevares, og som mål for kalde slengskudd. Men altfor sjelden projiseres det bilde inn i konversasjonen som viser det uhyggelig dype fundament godtkjøpsånden står på. Et fundament av sterke behov, som ikke anerkjennes i de kvalifiserte eksklusive kretser. Behov for noe annet, for et eller annet slags mere, rikere, som fortettes til desperat sult og tørst. Og disse elendige, disse som bare har dårlig eller “ingen smak”, hvad er det de egentlig gjør når de søker, og finner, det krimskramset som fallbys? De sutter tott!”)

88. *Ibid.* (“denne forsømte verdensospennende elendighet”)

89. Arne Remlov interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 04.11.1996 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive] (“Det er bare tull. Kunden har som regel ikke rett.”)

for”, i.e. the public and the consumer, and even “*comprehensive knowledge about the society in which one shall work.*”⁹³ It is, however, crucial to understand that Brochmann’s prime motivation for his suggested drastic remedy was not user participation in the design process, but to procure greater power, influence and acknowledgment for the designers as a social group.

Brochmann’s rather ambivalent attitude towards the consumer reached a zenith after a visit to the Soviet Union. He wanted to have faith in the consumers’ agency and good will, but resigned when realizing that the totalitarian socialist strategies he experienced on this trip instead supplied him with new arguments for the customary patronizing position. The utopian idealism of his youth stemming from his affiliation with the highly progressive Socialist Architects’ Association (Socialistiske arkitekters forening—SAF) during his student years had taken serious blows. Now, he dismissed the notion of the proletarian architect as quixotic romanticism—the architect (and designer) had to acknowledge his position as an intellectual worker and accept the consequences this implied, e.g. the burdening role of shepherd and educator of the populace.⁹⁴

In serving the public one would assume, Brochmann said, that the public’s taste constituted a regulating element because what people want must be what is right. But unfortunately, the poor consumer did not know what was best for him:

But people only get confused by this constant pressure of nickel and new models, they choose and prefer by completely different rules than those which would have applied had the ideas come from within.⁹⁵

In this utterly condescending frame of mind, the forces of industry and commerce were to blame. It is thus only logical that Brochmann looked with envy to the Soviet Union where they had “abolished the culture-killing profit greed of private capitalism” and created “a

90. It must be stressed that these people were not social scientists, and their direct knowledge of academic theory was on the whole most likely very limited. Still, many of the views on consumption and the consumer figuring in the Norwegian design community at this time appear to have been partially indebted to Thorstein Veblen’s famous and influential notion of a *conspicuous consumption* (although their dream was a world of good taste where everyone agreed with the designers’ rationale rather than Veblen’s technocratic utopia where everyone agreed with the engineers’ rationale) and the more contemporary *seductive consumption* as articulated by American social critics like Vance Packard. Some also resemble the ideas of the *manipulative consumption* developed by the Frankfurter school (most prominently Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse). See e.g.: Thorstein Veblen, *The theory of the leisure class: an economic study of institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: McKay, 1957), Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* [1955] (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1947] (New York: Continuum, 1972) and Herbert Marcuse, *Kultur und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965). More recent perspectives on consumption, like the *symbolic consumption* of Pierre Bourdieu, the *creative/constructive consumption* of Jean Baudrillard, the *aesthetic consumption* of Zygmunt Bauman, the *identity consumption* of Daniel Miller or the *political consumption* of Naomi Klein were for obvious reasons not available. See e.g.: Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996), Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society* [1970] (London: Sage, 1998), Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* [1972] (St. Louis: Telos, 1981), Zygmunt Bauman, “Broken Lives—Broken Strategies” in Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995) p 72-104, Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), Daniel Miller, “The Myths of Consumption” in Daniel Miller (ed.), *Acknowledging Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1995) p 20-35 and Naomi Klein, *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999)

possibility to intervene regulatory with the spheres of culture and production which one sometimes may be tempted to envy them.”⁹⁶ Because, as Brochmann later wrote, “[e]veryone knows that the Western European Man frankly speaking is destroyed by advertising, the coloured press and mercantilism.”⁹⁷ But, Brochmann reassured the reader, “it is the *people’s* welfare it is all about”. As evidence of the virtues of regulatory intervention, he reported from a new apartment building he had visited in Moscow where “the dining table was fixed to the wall where everyone should place it anyhow”.⁹⁸

Realizing that not all readers were equally enthused by authoritarian and doctrinaire aspects of communism, Brochmann sought to counter those who “think about ‘The brave, new world’” by asserting that the consumer’s individual freedom of choice was nothing but an illusion anyhow: “People *believe* they choose personally, but in reality act like hypnotized media”.⁹⁹ And since their freedom was just an illusion, Brochmann implies, the consumers should agree to be incapacitated. Both taste and consumption would be better off in the hands of professionals—i.e. architects and designers. Jens von der Lippe offered a slightly different explanation for why the consumers’ preferences and agencies—no matter how noble their taste and morals were—alone did not result in good design. In an increasingly commodified and affluent society, he argued, no consumer could possess the vast expertise required to make the “correct” choices all the time. Developing, producing and marketing industrial goods, then, was a public matter, too important to be left to mercantile forces.¹⁰⁰

Whether blamed on the consumer or on the industry, this tendency of explaining the unsatisfactory success of modernist design by reference to the economic system of the consumer society of the West became customary. The idealism of modernist design simply was not compatible with the hedonism of consumer society. The French sociologist Jean Baudrillard has argued that this line of reasoning is fundamentally flawed, because the formal functionalism of modern design is in fact analogous with the

91. As if the shifting and differing views on the nature and agency of the consumer was not enough: The erratic character of this discourse was augmented by the tendency of advocates of “good design” to assign the role of villain alternately to the consumer, the retailer and the industry when debating why “good design” did not reign supreme. The British design historian Judy Attfield has demonstrated that historians must be careful not to reproduce this simplistic argumentation when studying these complex processes, and opt instead for a more nuanced and reflective interpretation: Judy Attfield, “Give ‘em something dark and heavy’: The Role of Design in the Material Culture of Popular British Furniture, 1939-1965” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 9, No. 3, 1996, p 185-201

92. Odd Brochmann, “Brukskunstneren—eller ridderen av den utydelige skikkelse” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 27 (“det store publikum velter seg i vrangforestillinger og forkvakling nede i sumpene.”)

93. *Ibid.* p 27-28 (“Økt viten, blant annet om dem man stort sett skal arbeide for... *omfattende viten om det samfunn man skal virke i.*”)

94. In this, Brochmann resembles the attitude expressed by the architect Per Cappelen who wrote in *Byggekunst* that “One is tempted to tell the villa builder to go to an architect and just say: Design a house for us. After that, they [sic] should by and large leave the architect alone.” *Bonytt* editor Arne Remlov, who held rather conservative political views, was clearly at odds with his colleague Brochmann’s Soviet-inspired doctrinairism regarding the citizen’s influence and power and thus accused Cappelen of being utterly arrogant and patronizing: Per Cappelen cited in Arne Remlov, “Med eller uten bundet mandat” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 150 (“Man får lyst til å be villabyggherren om å gå til en arkitekt og bare si: Tegn et hus til oss. Derefter burde de [sic] la arkitekten være i fred, stort sett.”)

95. Odd Brochmann, “Brukskunst for folket” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 41 (“Men folk blir jo bare forvirret av dette stadige press av nikkel og nye modeller, de velger og foretrekker efter helt andre regler enn dem som ville gjelde om begrepene var sprunget ut innenfra.”)

economic functionalism of modern (consumer) society. The likes of Brochmann and von der Lippe, says Baudrillard, “forget[] that the [economic] system (and the whole process of consumption that it implies) is also rational and perfectly consistent with itself. It triumphantly fulfills the claims of functionality.”¹⁰¹

As should be clear by now, the validity of their arguments notwithstanding, the applied art community had a long-standing tradition of demonstrating ill faith in the will, power and agency of the consumer. It is worth mentioning, though, that this attitude seems to have been significantly propelled by the onset of the so-called affluent society in the 1960s. Jørgen Skaare, director of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), professed that now, more than ever, there was a desperate need to “create a shield of protection for the helpless consumer against cynically speculating manufacturers and distributive trades”, and pointed to the Consumers’ Council (Forbrukerrådet) as a prospective ally in this mission. Such was the “dilemma of the welfare state”, he argued: the consumer’s possibilities by far exceeded his powers.¹⁰²

For obvious reasons, the practice end of the design domain—designers at work in the industry and the company managements—had to show a more pragmatic attitude towards public taste and consumer preferences. Even a company clearly belonging to the traditional industrial art branch like the silversmith company Oslo Sølvvareverksted A/S showed a distinctly mercantile and market-oriented mindset when developing their first cutlery series in a modern formal language, *Taffel*: Before deciding on the final design, the company and designer Hermann Bongard developed five different prototype versions which they presented to various sample groups of “ordinary customers” conducting somewhat of a Gallup poll in order to measure the models’ public appeal.¹⁰³ In a market economy, the consumers’ purchasing power simply could not be ignored—at least not by

96. *Ibid.* p 41-43 (“avskaffet privatkapitalismens kulturdpende profittbegjær... en mulighet for å gripe regulerende inn i kultur- og produksjonsliv, som man av og til kan fristes til å misunne dem.”)

97. Odd Brochmann, “Arkitekten og mennesket” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 191 (“Nu vet jo alle at det vesteuropeiske menneske i bund og grund er ødelagt av reklame, kulørt presse og merkantilisering.”)

98. Odd Brochmann, “Brukskunst for folket” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 41-43 (“Det er *folkets* ve og vel det hele dreier seg om... Spisebordet sto veggfast der alle likevel burde plassere det”). For a discussion of the thoroughly authoritarian trait of the design of this type of integrated/fixed furniture widely used in the Soviet housing projects in the late 1950s and early 1960s (like those visited by Brochmann), see: Iurii Gerchuk, “The Aesthetics of Everyday Life in the Khrushchev Thaw in the USSR (1954-64)” in Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (eds.), *Style and Socialism—Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000) p 91-92

99. *Ibid.* p 43 (“tenker på ‘The brave, new world’... Folk tror at de velger personlig, men oppfører seg i virkeligheten som hypnotiserte medier”)

100. Jens von der Lippe, “Et samfunnsanliggende” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 172-173

101. Baudrillard’s criticism does of course not mention Brochmann and von der Lippe, but is directed against the French communication theorist Abraham Moles who in a 1967 article in the French design magazine *Esthétique Industrielle* explained the limited success of modernist design by reference to the nature of the market economy and consumer society, in the same way Brochmann and von der Lippe did: Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* [1972] (St. Louis: Telos, 1981) p 195. Baudrillard had little sympathy for men like Brochmann and von der Lippe: “So, designers complain of being misunderstood and of their ideal disfigured by the system? All puritans are hypocrites.” (p 196)

102. Jørgen Skaare, “Varetilbud og kjøpepress—et velferdsstatens dilemma” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpagged [app.] (“skape et vern for den hjelpeløse forbruker mot kynisk spekulerende produsenter og omsetningsledd... velferdsstatens dilemma”)

those whose bread and butter depended on it. Recalling Bongard's affirmation of the modernist ethos—that the designer “has the ambition to get the public to accept a new, beautiful simplicity” it here becomes clear that his experience from design for industrial companies had taught him “that the first step must not be too audacious.”¹⁰⁴

Another project where Bongard faced a similar situation was when designing the *Vulcanus* series with the *A la Carte* decor for Figgjo Fajanse AS. Here, on the other hand, *Bonytt* journalist Harriet Clayhills—while applauding the series for its “good and practical form of the various objects”—thought the designer had gone too far in catering to the presumed public taste and consumer preferences, at least when it came to the rather lively decor:

The decor is said to be necessary facing Norwegian customers, but is the public really not starting to notice how the food and the decor fight for attention when such strongly decorated things are in use?¹⁰⁵

Clayhills criticised what she deemed to be a general tendency towards excess in decor, and implied that the only reason why such designs were launched was that the manufacturers thought that this was what the public wanted. The fact that Bongard—a freelance designer highly respected and admired in the design community in general and among the *Bonytt* editorial committee—enjoyed great freedom when it came to the aesthetic expression of the decors for Figgjo and seemed quite enthused about the project does not seem to have crossed Clayhills' mind. Although she at least wanted to believe that the public's taste was “better” than what she implied the manufacturers thought it to be, it is interesting to note that she wrote off this decor as a manufacturer's unfortunate and misunderstood compliance with consumer preferences—while it really seems to have been somewhat of the designer's own pet project.¹⁰⁶

16.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed form as fame, as finesse and as feelings. In various ways, the more elaborate of these debates represented either continuity of concerns or strategies for unification in this period of critical change in the Norwegian design community. Moreover, we have seen a couple of examples of how issues that traditionally have been

103. Thomas Kvalø and Hermann Bongard interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Et skritt fremover” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, p 111

104. Hermann Bongard interviewed in Clayhills, *op.cit.* (“har... den ambisjon å få publikum til å godta en ny, vakker enkelthet... det første skritt ikke må være for dristige. [sic]”)

105. Harriet Clayhills, “Fra komfyren til bordet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 21, 1961, unpaginated (“god og praktisk form på de forskjellige gjenstander... Dekoren sies jo å være nødvendig overfor norske kjøpere, men begynner virkelig ikke publikum å merke hvordan maten og dekoren kjemper om interessen når slike sterkt dekorerte ting er i bruk?”)

106. See e.g. Contract between Figgjo Fajanse A.S. and Hermann Bongard (September 1. 1956—Figgjo archive), Letter from Ragnar Grimsrud to Hermann Bongard (04.07.1956—Figgjo archive), Letter from Bongard to Ragnar Grimsrud (11.04.1957—Figgjo archive) and Letter from Bongard to Harald Lima (23.04.1957—Figgjo archive)

difficult to address or come to terms with within a modernist ethos now were being discussed if not resolved.

The chapter started out by discussing the lingering desire for international fame. A certain degree of attention and acclaim bestowed on Norwegian design at a few international events in the 1950s seems to have whet the appetite and inspired a continued effort to achieve international reputation. However, whereas in the preceding decade export potential was continually emphasised as the primary motivation for this promotional work (albeit mostly as a smokescreen), the applied art community's international promotion of Norwegian design in the 1960s did little or nothing to relate to the new and radically improved possibilities for export in the wake of the EFTA treaty.

The main feature of this chapter, however, has been the analysis of how the applied art community constructed and negotiated a strategy aimed at resisting the ongoing fragmentation process in the design field and upholding their holistic and universalist approach to design. Insisting on the artistic aspects of design as the major unifying trait certainly did have its rationale, advantages and successes in the internal unification, but the strategy proved rather ill equipped for some of the challenges posed by external demarcation.

A more general point can also be made on the basis of this discussion: Faced with product types that resisted their traditional categories and vocabulary, as well as with the emergence of interest groups and actors from other realms of society showing an increased attention to design, the applied art community consolidated and even reinforced their firm grounding in the cultural sphere. By choosing this strategy in coping with a more and more intricate and multivalent design field they can in a sense be said to have marginalised themselves, allowing others to join in the discourse on what modern design should be.

The latter part of this chapter gave an account of two ways in which the Norwegian design community in the 1960s made room for discussing more controversial issues; here questions pertaining to how users matter to design. The first take on this revolved around the perceived "need for cosiness" and how designers should investigate the emotional functions users constructed around artefacts. The second take on the role of the user appeared as a resurrection of the debate on whether the consumer should be considered a friend or a foe. These issues were neither exhausted nor resolved, but their mere discussion indicates a new turn in the design community.

The next chapter will explore two final, rather drastic turns in the mediation of design ideology that we have traced through three decades—one turn that regards the message and one that regards the medium.

17 (Re)forming message and medium: Radical design ideals, pliant design advice

17.1 Introduction

As we have seen thus far, the design ideology (co-)produced and re-produced in the Norwegian design community in the mid-twentieth century was far from static or unisonous. Nevertheless, it can hardly be said to have changed by revolutionary leaps and jumps. But surely, the famous political and cultural radicalism of the late 1960s must have had some impact on the design community as well? If so, how were radical design ideas formulated and discussed in Norway? On the other hand it is interesting to ask how design mediation related to the massive increase in prosperity: When people could relate to interior design beyond utility and necessity, would they be susceptible to fervent advocacy, or should they rather be given friendly advice? As we now draw close to the end of this one of the present study's two main trajectories, we shall explore two modes of more radical change that occurred chiefly in the latter part of the 1960s. These two phenomena are very different in nature, but equally important and both represent profound attempts at *clearing the agenda* and at *reconfiguring design cultures*.

The first half of this chapter explores how the more radical components of design ideology that slowly gained momentum throughout the 1960s now and then came to the fore in the Norwegian design community and in *Bonytt*, and (partially) (re)formed the message. In various and not always coherent ways, petitions were made for increased attention to the social and moral responsibility of design. At the risk of slightly anticipating events, one might say that these ideas questioned what design for the *real* world would entail. In our context, one of the more interesting expressions of these radical design ideals came with the declaration from a young design educator that “We have teacups enough!”, indicating a (symbolic, if not actual) break with the applied art movement and its devotion to *more beautiful everyday goods*.

Whereas these significant ideas to some degree contributed to (re)forming the message conveyed in *Bonytt* in the 1960s, the last part of this chapter will focus on how several factors combined in (re)forming the medium itself. The many eventful years of publication that have been discussed in this study clearly tell of a dynamic magazine in constant transformation, while all the same remaining true to the basic concept of being a propaganda vehicle and an arena for professional debate. However, in the course of a short period in the late 1960s, *Bonytt* changed character quite drastically and became a popular interior decoration magazine. Under the title *nye bonytt*, the it went from fervent advocacy to friendly advice.

17.2 Design for the *real*/world?

A *Bonytt* report from the 1960 *XII Triennale di Milano* contains an early example of voices questioning the designers' responsibility in the consumer society and requesting a debate on material culture and design for the real world. Most of the contributions to this manifestation, including Norway's, showed only limited consideration for the guiding theme, "home and school"—at least the latter half of it. Mexico, on the other hand, responded promptly to the organizers' challenge, exhibiting a small prefabricated schoolhouse including a teacher's apartment currently built by the thousands throughout the country's rural areas.

The building was said to be composed of industrially produced, prefabricated, simple elements, with extensive use of light metal and plastics. These could all be placed on a truck or even carried by manual power, and the concept allowed for the use of on-site materials e.g. for the roofs. It was fully equipped with a self-contained sanitary system and power generator, so that the schoolhouse could be put up anywhere independent of any existing infrastructure. Even the furniture was designed for on-site assembly requiring a minimum of tools. In short, it was a remarkable example of how social and ecological problems could be addressed through innovative design. In her *Bonytt* report from the *XII Triennale*, Brita Åkerman,¹ a member of the Swedish Consumer Council (Statens Konsumentråd), saw this as an emancipation of design from the strait jacket of beautiful objects. She started by asking

Can not all these national and international exhibitions of things which ever so often are organized, sporting vast amounts of labour and money, for once present us with some of the current problems regarding the production of things and possession of things...?²

Disregarding some rather condescending remarks and romantic ideas, e.g. about some of the exhibited handicraft utensils "manufactured by simple people in carefree creative work",³ Åkerman nonetheless put her finger on a topic which perhaps more than any other would reveal and catalyse the widening gap between industrial designers and the applied art movement—the shift from "good design" towards "problem solving".⁴

-
1. Åkerman's background makes her stance in this matter particularly interesting. Holding a Fil.lic. degree, she was a highly educated academic, and became a pioneer of Swedish social engineering, housing studies and home economics. What is most fascinating about her position, however, is that she was a leading figure both in the field of consumer research and home economics (co-founder (1944) of The Home Research Institute (Hemmens Forskningsinstitut—HFI)) as well as in the design community (vice-president (from 1945) of the Swedish Applied Art Association (Svenska Slöjdföreningen)).
 2. Brita Åkerman, "Også på triennalen" in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 11 ("Kan ikke alle disse nasjonale og internasjonale utstillinger av ting som til stadighet arrangeres med oppbud av alverdens arbeidskraft og penger, engang presentere for oss noe av de aktuelle problemer omkring produksjonen av ting og besittelse av ting...?") Åkermann originally wrote the article for the Swedish magazine *Att bo*, but the decision to translate and reprint it indicates that the topic was considered important by *Bonytt* as well.
 3. *Ibid.* ("fremstillet av enkle mennesker i sorgløst skapende arbeide")
 4. How Norwegian industrial designers increasingly came to consider design as "problem solving" throughout the 1960s is discussed in Trygve Ask, *God Norsk Design—Konstitueringen av industridesign som profesjon i Norge* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitekturhøgskolen i Oslo, 2004) p 147-155

Another critique of the role of design in the consumer society came from Elias Cornell, a lecturer in architectural history at Chalmers Institute of Technology in Gothenburg and former student of Gregor Paulsson. In a 1962 *Bonytt* article, he presented a brief account of one of his favourite topics—the history of the *people's home* (*folkhemmet*) and its interiors and furniture—from the “true riches” of the peasant cottage of yore to the “delusive luxury” of the modern apartment.⁵ Now that the consumers could afford to buy stuff beyond the bare necessities of life, living in an “affluent society”, the designers seemed to have lost all professional ethics and social responsibility, he argued. Cornell accused them of unscrupulously serving the profit greed of industry and commerce, designing seductive but worthless “artistic garbage” dictated by the whims of fashion and the salability of the product. Cornell's only suggested remedy, however, recalls the Arts & Crafts Movement a century earlier—a dissociation with industry and restoration of craft production in the name of intellectual, artistic and cultural values.⁶

From a more unexpected source, communicated in a rather unusual forum, came a kindred criticism. Knut Fægri, a professor of botany at the University of Bergen, presented an article in the business magazine *Farmand* entitled “‘The Designer’—the 11th Plague” (“‘Designeren’—den 11. landeplage”).⁷ Fægri's blowoff was occasioned by a personal frustration with the 1960 discontinuance of the production of the Porsgrund oven-to-table set *Glohane* designed by Tias Eckhoff in 1955, ending possibilities of supplementary purchases. He poured out his wrath in several directions: Towards the consumers, for “not appreciating the difference between buying a service and buying a summer hat”.⁸ Towards the manufacturers, for constructing consumption:

if they can get the summer hat mentality sufficiently inculcated, one might reach the point where people scrap their tableware once a year in order to follow the “designer” fashion. Then we'll be talking sales[.]⁹

-
5. Cornell was a highly esteemed architectural historian also in the Norwegian architectural community. For instance, he was appointed 1st opponent when Christian Norberg-Schulz defended his doctoral dissertation *Intentions in Architecture* on April 17th 1964 and became the first architect to be conferred a doctoral degree at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH): Helge Abrahamson, “En aktuell kunsthistoriker” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 176, Dag Johnson, *Den første doktorpromosjon ved Universitetet i Trondheim, 2. september 1972* (Trondheim: UniT, 1973) p 46 and Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture* [Doctoral dissertation] (Trondheim: NTH, 1964)
 6. Elias Cornell, “Lyx eller rikedom i våra hem” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 154-156 (“sanna rikedommen... snutfager lyx... överflödssamhälle... konstnärliga skräp”)
 7. Knut Fægri, “‘Designeren’—den 11. landeplage” in *Farmand* No. 13, 1962, p 22-23. Fægri's title paraphrased the title of a famous and much disputed lecture given by the poet Arnulf Øverland at Oslo Students' Society (Studentersamfundet i Oslo) in 1931 entitled “Christianity, the Tenth Plague” (“Kristendommen, den tiende landeplage”). Following the lecture, a professor of theology at the Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology (Det teologiske Menighetsfakultetet) reported Øverland and he was subsequently charged with blasphemy. The trial, however—where Øverland acted as his own counsel—resulted in a full acquittal. See: Arnulf Øverland, “Kristendommen, den tiende landeplage” in Arnulf Øverland, *Tre foredrag til offentlig forargelse* (Oslo: Fram, 1933) p 7-34. Øverland's essay even made it into the fictional work of fellow writers—an intriguing example is how the equally controversial author Agnar Mykle let the protagonist of his novel *Lasso rundt fru Luna* “reel... about a week on end in the most intense ecstasy” after having read “Kristendommen, den tiende landeplage”: Agnar Mykle, *Lasso rundt fru Luna* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1954) p 45 (“rave... rundt en hel uke i den voldsomste ekstase”)
 8. Fægri, *Op.cit.* p 23 (“oppfatter ikke forskjellen på å kjøpe et servis og på å kjøpe en sommerhatt”)

Towards the media, for being completely uncritical and full of awe in their relations to the designers and thus failing their mission to guide and counsel the public on matters of consumerism.

But, as the title clearly announces, Fægri's primary target was the designers—who he consistently referred to as “designers”, effectively exploiting the derogatory potential of the quotation marks:

“The designer”'s task is to produce new forms, and the worst thing that could possibly happen to him is that he produces a truly good, permanent form: what is he then to do the rest of his life?.. “[T]he designers” must demonstrate that they are indispensable: exit Glohane, damn the customers, they are always without rights. And next time, the customers say damn Norwegian crockery, let us stick to foreign standard designs, those we can at least find again.¹⁰

The crux of Fægri's criticism was thus that the designers were self-asserting, egocentric and cunning opportunists, turning everything they laid their hands on into ephemeral fashion products, while at the same time being utterly servile to and uncritical of the manufacturers' immoral and irresponsible perpetual novelty pursuit. The “flaw” which could be—and indeed was—observed in Fægri's argument was the degree to which he empowered his enemy: He seemed to believe that it was the designer who made the decision to discontinue the manufacture of a product, if not directly then at least indirectly by way of new designs making existing products (appear) obsolete.

Both the former sales manager of Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik A/S, Viggo B. Heirung,¹¹ and the director, Jacob Aall Møller, felt compelled to lecture the botanist on the realities of industrial manufacture: The discontinuance of *Glohane*, they both proclaimed, had nothing to do with the product's design, nor did it result from new designs taking its place.¹² In response, Fægri simply adjusted his aim slightly and claimed that these explanations did not change anything. The manufacturers had to appreciate that launching a product entailed responsibilities and that discountenances and short production lives was a deceitful and immoral practice.¹³ Aall Møller concurred

9. *Ibid.* (“kan de få innarbeidet sommerhatt-mentaliteten tilstrekkelig, kan man kanskje komme dit hen at folk kasserer sitt spisestell en gang om året for å følge med “designer”-moten. Da skal det bli salg da”)

10. *Ibid.* p 22 (““Designeren”'s oppgave er å lage nye former, og det verste som kan tenkes å hende ham, er at han lager en virkelig god, permanent form: hva skal han så ta seg til resten av livet?.. “designerne” skal jo vise at de er uunnværlige: ut med Glohane, pokker ta kundene, de er alltid uten rett. Og neste gang sier kundene pokker ta norsk stentøy, la oss holde oss til utenlandske standard-mønstre, dem kan vi iallfall få igjen.”)

11. Heirung was sales manager at Porsgrund from 1954 to 1959 when he moved back to his native Trondheim where he managed the tableware retail company Andreas Moe, selling e.g. *Glohane* and other Porsgrund products. One of his tasks at Porsgrund had been to come up with names for all the factory's products, among them *Glohane*. In addition to his mercantile training, Heirung had studied textile design at John Lernings textiltkniska institut in Norrköping, Sweden in the late 1930s: Viggo B. Heirung in conversation with the author, 14.10.2005

12. Viggo B. Heirung, ““Designeren”—den 11. landeplage” in *Farmand* No. 15, 1962, p 63 and Jacob Aall Møller, ““Designeren”—den 11. landeplage” in *Farmand* No. 17, 1962, p 3-5. *Glohane* was not manufactured at Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik A/S, but at A/S Sanitærporselen where it had been baked between their usual production bakings of toilets and sinks to fill spare capacity. This spare capacity vanished as A/S Sanitærporselen experienced an increase in demand for their core products. And due to differences both in material and baking, the production could not be moved to Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik A/S.

13. Knut Fægri, “Glohaner og knehøner” in *Farmand* No. 18, 1962, p 31-32

with Fægri that the perpetual quest for novelty was a nuisance, but blamed it on a frivolous and irresponsible public. The designer just did his job the best he could, concluded the director with a plea: “Professor Fægri, let the designer off the hook!”¹⁴

Even the designer—*Glohane*’s designer, Tias Eckhoff, at that—agreed that

we have... been bestowed with a disturbing quest for novelty. The porcelain follows the ever more rapid changes in fashions; the models’ production lives seem to be getting shorter and shorter. The manufacturers must sell and the pressure for novelties rises as the product must be adapted to the broad market. The result is that one often end up in quaintness. Both form and decor become mannered.¹⁵

Although Eckhoff had left his position as design manager at Porsgrund in 1959, he seems to agree with his former colleagues Heirung and Aall Møller that this deplorable situation could not be blamed on manufacturers or designers—washing their hands of the responsibility Fægri burdened them with, they held the whimsical consumers and their uncultivated taste responsible for the development.

By this time, the criticism accusing designers of continuously supplying manufacturers with novel designs for the sake of novel designs appeared from several quarters. As mentioned above, Fægri’s accusations resembled those put forward by Elias Cornell who accused them of unscrupulously serving the profit greed of industry and commerce, designing alluring instant garbage. Perhaps more surprising was it when the economist Alf Midtbust, director of the National Federation of Furniture Manufacturers (*Møbelprodusentenes Landsforbund*) expressed similar attitudes. Just like Fægri, he had experienced that a product he wished to purchase had been discontinued—in this case an arm-chair known as *Kaminstolen* manufactured by Aarnæs & Hjelm and designed by Adolf Relling in 1946.¹⁶ As a representative of the industry, Midtbust understandably aimed elsewhere: the novelty-crazed public was an easy target for him as well—more interesting is his critique, however carefully worded, of the design community for being overly keen on experimenting. According to Midtbust, this attitude only complemented the consumers’ flare for novelties, and thus contributed to what he saw as a pressure on the manufacturers to constantly bring out something new.¹⁷

Returning briefly to Knut Fægri’s contribution it becomes clear that the role of design and designers in the consumer society was beginning to be questioned from several

14. Jacob Aall Møller, “‘Glohaner og knehøner’” in *Farmand* No. 20, 1962, p 75 (“Professor Fægri, slipp designeren fri!”)

15. Tias Eckhoff interviewed in Ragnhild Bjelke, “Vurder ikke dekoren isolert” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 213 (“vi har... fått et urovekkende nyhetsjageri. Porselenet følger de stadig hurtigere motesvingninger; modellenes levetid synes å bli kortere og kortere. Produsentene skal selge og presset etter nyheter stiger samtidig som varen skal tilpasses det store marked. Følgen er at man ofte ender i det aparte. Både form og dekor blir affektert.”)

16. A curious fact is that this very chair—albeit with a slight redesign by Else and Nordahl Solheim—was reissued in 1965, although it dubious that the decision was made based on Midtbust’s “obituary”: Arne Remlov, “Vår mann i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 258

17. Alf Midtbust, “Nekrolog over en stol” in *Bonytt* Vol. 23, 1963, p 82-83 and Alf Midtbust, “Quo vadis?” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 113. The *Bonytt* journalist Harriet Clayhills, who often portrayed herself as the consumer’s advocate, also made similar arguments concerning what she claimed to be an “increasing frequency in the oscillations of the furniture fashion”: Harriet Clayhills, “Hold fast ved modellen...” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 122 (“Takten øker i møbelmøtens svingninger”)

quarters, especially expressed as a concern for frivolous consumption and illegitimate novelty of design.¹⁸ Still, there is reason to suspect that there was more to Fægri's criticism than this vehement disgust for fashionism and novelty craze. As a botanist, he developed a strong interest in and passion for climatic studies, ecology, resource management and the preservation of natural resources.¹⁹ Although these dispositions were not explicit in the *Farmand* articles, it nevertheless seems plausible that his aversion to what he considered to be an increasingly ephemeral character of many products had other underpinnings as well. And if we interpret Fægri as implicitly linking consumer society and industrial design with ecology and resource management, his criticism surely becomes poignant.

As we have seen, Fægri was opposed by representatives of the industry who accused him of a poor understanding of the realities of commerce and industry as well as of shooting the pianist. Since, on the other hand, no designers had retorted, Arne Remlov took it upon himself to speak up on behalf of the profession. Remlov based his defence on the presumption that Fægri held an antiquated view of the design profession, reminding the professor that design was not just about the superficial form and colour of an object. Also, the *Bonytt* editor displayed a far more positivistic attitude towards change than Fægri:

[I]s it not... natural and appropriate that [the designer] seeks to improve the items for which he is responsible..? Generally one might say that reaching other results is a sign of greater knowledge, that it in other words is what we call development.²⁰

The wheel kept on turning, Remlov argued—development was a good thing, and the designer was by no means the weak-willed marionette he blamed Fægri for claiming. On the contrary, Remlov asserted—the designer was a earnest and righteous professional with impeccable moral standards. A decent designer would never give in to modishness, but only present designs which represented genuine, uncompromised improvements.²¹ With the benefit of hindsight it is tempting to speculate whether Fægri's criticism perhaps would have fallen in more fertile soil had he made a more explicit link between commodity production and ecology and resource management.

A very different, but also fascinating take on the newfound concern for the contextual morality and responsibility of design was the growing propaganda for the use of indigenous materials. This was most clearly expressed in the field of furniture design. It

18. Incidentally, this criticism was remarkably similar to the disgust the Norwegian design community a few years earlier had shown for the *styling* so prominent in American mainstream design of the 1950s: Change for the sake of change, design used as commodity cosmetics. See e.g.: Thorbjørn Rygh, “Amerikansk Form” in Thorvald Krohn-Hansen (ed.), *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1953* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1954) p 14 and Jens von der Lippe, “Amerikansk virksomhet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 14, 1954, p 65

19. Some of his publications may give an indication of this: Knut Fægri, “Klimahistorie og arkeologi” in *Naturen* No. 10, 1942, p 310-317, Knut Fægri, “Naturvern i mange land” in *Naturen* No. 9, 1956, p 515-531 and Knut Fægri and L. van der Pijl, *The Principles of Pollination Ecology* (Toronto: Pergamon, 1966)

20. Arne Remlov, “Designerens ansvar” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 113 (“er det ikke... naturlig og riktig at han søker å forbedre de artikler han har ansvaret for..? Som regel kan man vel si at det å komme til andre resultater er et tegn på større viten, at det med andre ord er det vi kaller utvikling.”)

21. *Ibid.*

started out in the latter part of the 1950s as a modest critique of the proliferation of teak as the material of choice in furniture production, but this early critique was chiefly based on the fear that the phenomenon resulted from the popularity of Danish furniture—the classical fear of fashion, one might say. But in the 1960s, teak was joined by other exotic types of wood such as mahogany and rosewood as objects of criticism, and now they were criticised—not for being a fad or a fashion—but for being alien, false and extravagant in the realm of Norwegian furniture production.²²

The National Federation of Furniture Manufacturers (Møbelprodusentenes Landsforbund) issued a design competition for furniture in pine and birch, and the 1965 Norwegian furniture fair in Stavanger featured many of these as well as other furniture in these materials.²³ *Bonytt* joined in and propagandised willingly and enthusiastically for the use of pine and birch, which could be found in abundance in Norwegian woods. Since these were indigenous materials, they were deemed “genuine”, “true”, “honest” and “moral”. In other words: Pine and birch were portrayed as “real” materials suitable for designing for the “real” world.²⁴ [Figure 17-1]

Here as well we must be careful not to extrapolate more recent ideas such as sustainability and eco-design back into the 1960s.²⁵ Still, I do not believe that this caution should preclude a considerate interpretation of the new advocacy of indigenous materials as a possible expression of a more or less articulate concern for resource management in the context of product development and design processes. And this campaign for genuineness and naturalness in the product development process can be seen as a reflection of the campaign for genuineness and naturalness in the appropriation and use of products so explicit in the consumption critique discussed above. One might say that these two campaigns made up each end of the growing concern for the contextual morality and responsibility of design.

An illustrative case in this connection is the third design competition organized by the Furniture Industry’s Trade Council (Bransjerådet for møbelindustrien) in 1965. First prize was awarded to the *Siesta* easy chair submitted by designer Ingmar Relling and the manufacturer Vestlandske Møbelfabrikk A/S, a remarkable product which has been in production ever since and is possibly the biggest success ever to emerge from the Norwegian furniture industry.²⁶ In her comment on the competition, *Bonytt* co-editor Liv Schjødt reticently seconded the jury’s decision—her real concern, however, was with a contribution which did *not* enthuse the jury:²⁷ The interior architect and furniture designer Edvin Helseth had on commission from Trysil Municipal Forest District (Trysil

22. See e.g. Arne Remlov, “Fra det ene til det andre...” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 242

23. Arne Remlov, “Fra Stavanger møbelmesse” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 274-276

24. See e.g. Alf Midtbust, “Frem for furua” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 126-127, Marianne Gullowsen, “Efterlyses...” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 139-140, Arne Remlov, “Det lyktes—så langt” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 221-224 and Arne Remlov, “Vår mann i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 252-258. One of the most enthusiastic proponents of using “real” materials (like pine) in “real” furniture (simple, affordable, functional durable—often modular systems) for “real” homes (e.g. modest apartments inhabited by families with small children) was the Hamar based interior architect Edvin Helseth: Harriet Clayhills, “Helseth med systemet” in *Bonytt* Vol. 24, 1964, p 22-25, Harriet Clayhills, “Hytter med system” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 240-243, Liv Schjødt, “Vi trenger hyttemøbler også!” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 12-13, Arne Remlov, “Stilkopier eller finsk dristighet” *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 228 and Sonja Schartum, “Fin form i furu” in *nye bonytt* No. 3, 1968, p 10-11

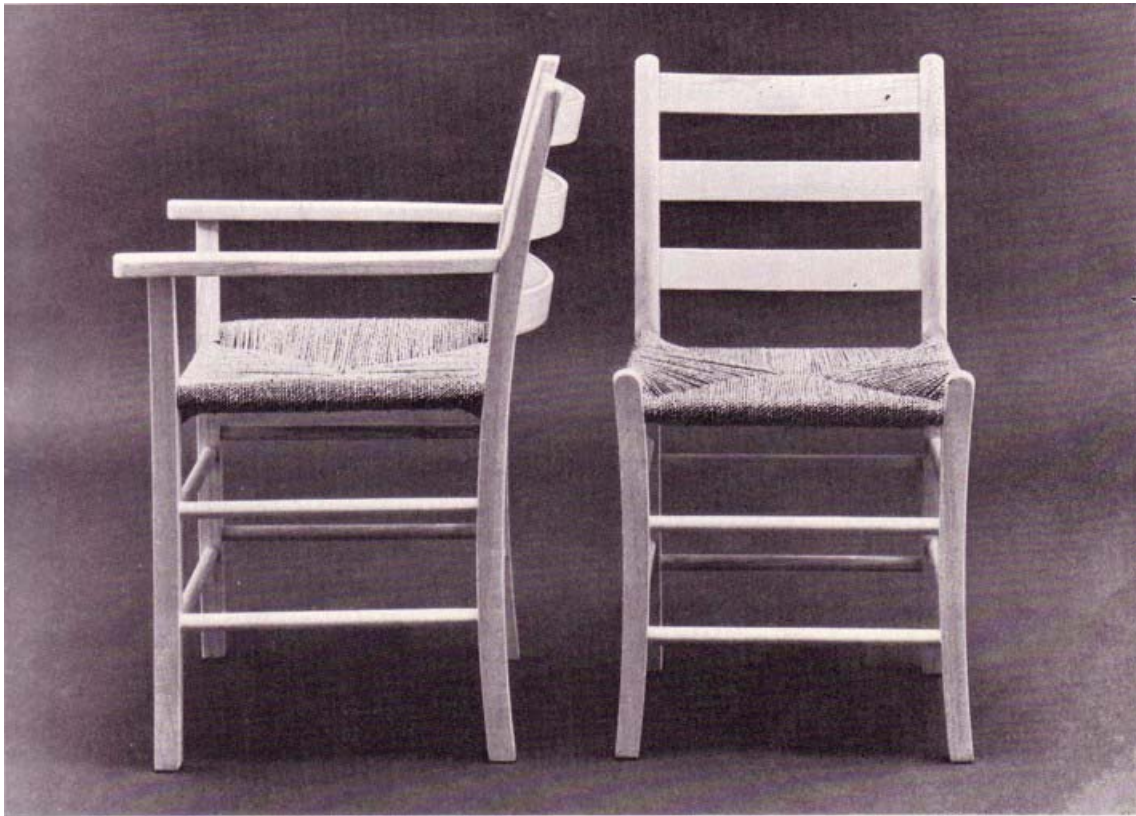


Figure 17–1: Chairs “*Jærstol*” (Pine) Aksel Hansson, 1965. This traditional chair type called *Jærstol* was singled out by *Bonytt* as exemplary design because they made use of the “true” material pine and because it was seen as a demonstration to the fact that the in modern design much sought after “simple elegance” could be achieved without resorting to extravagant, “alien” and “false” forms and materials. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 25, 1965)

kommunale skogforvaltning) designed prototypes for a furniture system intended for manufacture by various local enterprises outside the established furniture industry. The motivation was to create viable business in rural districts, thus requiring low costs of investment, production and material, and low skill requirements. Based on this

25. The British design historian Clive Dilnot has demonstrated that many design histories has made this mistake of lapsing into retrospective constructions of traditions of contemporary ideas: Clive Dilnot, “The State of Design History, Part II” in Victor Margolin (ed.), *Design Discourse: History, theory, criticism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989) p 233- 250. The many problematic aspects of such a practice—constructing a genealogical history of ideas that predates their fully fledged conceptualization—are discussed e.g. in Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas” in James Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context—Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988) p 29-67. It might be mentioned, here, that Michel Foucault claimed to have resolved this predicament through his method of genealogy by introducing what was to him the essential distinction between *beginnings* and *origins*. Origins, Foucault argued, imply *causes* and are thus not legitimate objects of study. Beginnings, on the other hand, imply *differences*—a phenomenon highly appropriate for historical investigation: Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” in Michel Foucault and Donald F. Bouchardand (ed.), *Language, Counter-memory, Practice—Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977) p 139-144. For a discussion of Foucault’s method of genealogy as a contribution to the historiography of culture, see: Patricia O’Brien, “Michel Foucault’s History of Culture” in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1989) p 25-46

programme, Helseth designed chairs and tables in a local material—pine—composed of simple, modular elements based on the standard 2,5''x5'' plank profile, each requiring minimal tooling/machining/finishing and easy to assemble. [Figure 17-2]

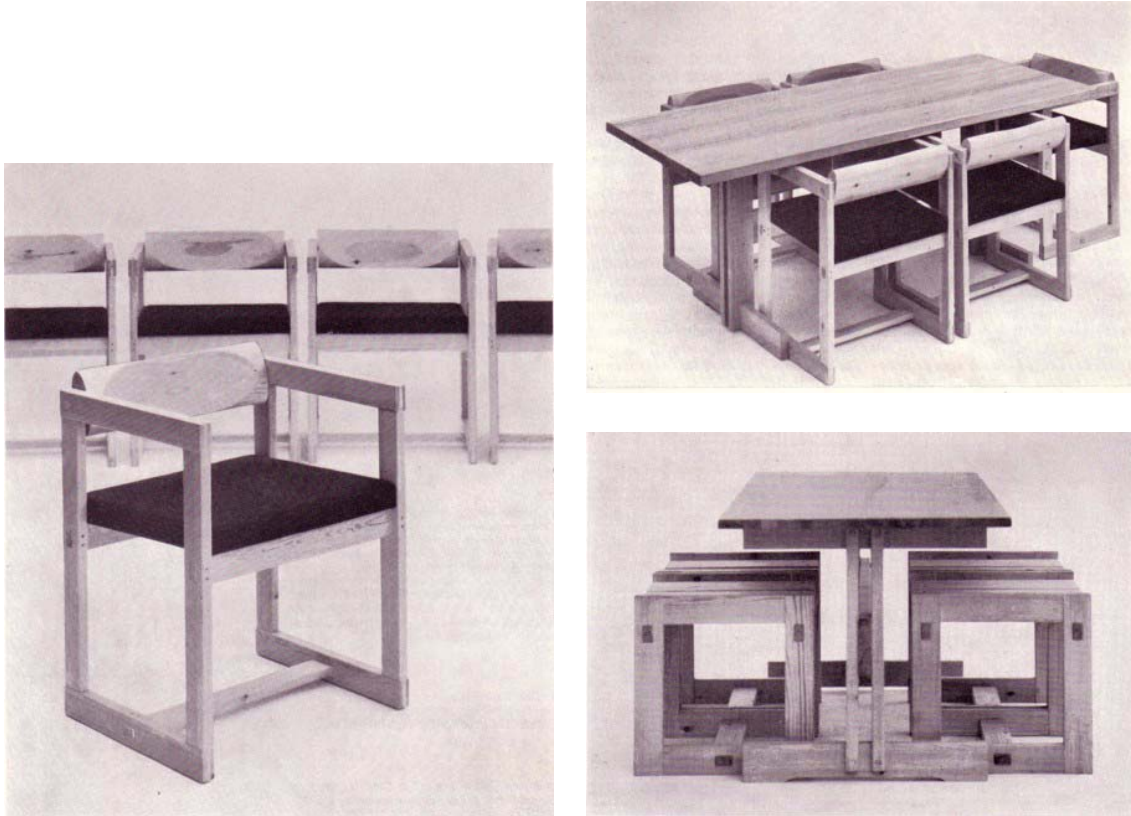


Figure 17-2: Furniture system *Trybo* (Pine) Prototypes commissioned by Trysil Municipal Forest District (Trysil kommunale skogforvaltning), 1965. Design: Edvin Helseth. This furniture was submitted to the third design competition organized by the Furniture Industry's Trade Council (Bransjerådet for møbelindustrien) but was not awarded or recommended by the jury—a shame, according to *Bonytt* co-editor Liv Schjødt. (Photos from *Bonytt*, Vol. 25, 1965)

Thus, these features were in line with the campaign for genuineness and naturalness on the production side of the contextual morality and responsibility of design. But Schjødt's enthusiasm was further fuelled by her assessment of the furniture's functionality and usability aspects, falling in line with the consumption side of the same discourse: Robust dimensions for longevity, rounded and flexible back rest for

26. For more on Relling and the *Siesta* chair, see: Fredrik Wildhagen, *Møbeldesigneren Ingmar Relling i perspektiv* (Sykkylven: Sykkylven næringsutvikling A/S, 1991). However, the big sales did not come until after a redesign in 1967 making allowance for thicker cushions—a good example of design as a *re-inscription* of new product affordances (script) as a result of the users' *de-inscription* of the original one. For the *Siesta* cushions affair, see: Kjetil Rolness, *Med smak skal hjemmet bygges—Innredning av det moderne Norge* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995) p 179. For a synopsis of the script-metaphor see: Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, "A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies" in Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (eds.), *Shaping Technology / Building Society—Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) p 259-264

27. Liv Schjødt, "Tordenskjolds soldater" in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 10-11

ergonomics, adjustable parts and particular nursery versions for child friendliness, arm rests below table top for floor space economy and low prices for affordability.²⁸ It was in other words considered an attempt at creating a low-impact, high-yield product—a design for the “real” world.

Although Helseth’s furniture system—dubbed *Trybo*—did not impress the jury of Furniture Industry’s Trade Council design competition, it later won approval elsewhere.²⁹ The system was expanded to include a vast range of furniture types when manufacture began in 1966. The Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) jury used much the same arguments as Liv Schjødt had done in her ode to the Helseth furniture when they awarded *Trybo* the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) for 1967:

The *Trybo* pine furniture shows originality and independent thinking and is an exceptionally good example of product development based on strictly limited raw materials and production facilities.³⁰

This remark combined with a commendation of the project’s aspect of regional development and local industry integration clearly indicated that also this part of the industrial design community showed increased concern for the contextual morality and responsibility of design. Helseth himself explained his motivation for the project as based on a strong social vocation:

I believe... that of greatest interest is the utility article which can be used by different persons with different needs, what I will call the social furniture, the aid... [T]he artefact must never become a goal in itself, but be thought of as part of a context.³¹

Hence, Helseth portrayed his design philosophy as a way of solving “real” problems for “real” people living in the “real” world.³² Design should serve Man and facilitate life, not create imposing objects of desire. This revolt against the old Paulssonian idea of *more*

28. Liv Schjødt, “Vi trenger hyttemøbler også!” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 12-13

29. A very curious example of such approval is that a Dutch professor of industrial design visiting Norway bought a *Trybo* chair and included it in the model collection at Eindhoven Academy of Industrial Design and that the chair and Helseth were the subjects of an article appearing in the Benelux magazine *Die Nieuwe*: N.N., “Norsk stol har suksess” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, unpagged [app.] The *Trybo* furniture series was also selected for the exhibition *Design in Scandinavia* that toured Australia in 1968: Ulf Hård af Segerstad, et al. (eds.) *Design in Scandinavia* (Stockholm: Victor Pettersons Bokindustri AB, 1968) unpagged

30. Alf Bøe, *Den norske Designpris de syv første år / The Norwegian Design Award its first seven years* (Oslo: Norsk Designcentrum, 1969) p 52. This was the second time Helseth received the Norwegian Design Award—his module based furnishing system for cupboards and drawer sections *Modul 5-15* won the 1963 edition. The jury considered it “a very praiseworthy attempt at simplifying and rationalising production, storage, and distribution.”: *Ibid.* p 44

31. Edvin Helseth interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Bonytt-intervju om disiplin og tilpasning” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 260 (“Jeg mener... at størst interesse har den bruksting som kan anvendes av ulike mennesker med ulike behov og som jeg vil kalle det sosiale møbel, hjelpemiddelet... gjenstanden aldri må bli et mål i seg selv, men tenkes som en del av en sammenheng.”)

32. Helseth later became involved in a project that was far more radical in this respect, when he in the early 1980s worked with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) on developing school furniture intended for production in Tanzania: Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, et al. (eds.), *Norsk kunsterleksikon* Vol. 2 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983) p 165

beautiful everyday goods (*vackrare vardagsvara*) made *Bonytt*'s Harriet Clayhills label Helseth as the *enfant terrible* of the design community: She depicted much Norwegian furniture design as becoming conform, conservative and pedantic—"But then you have the obstinate and insubordinate *Edvin Helseth* as a hair in the soup. He who does not want to make beautiful furniture".³³

Still, the most unconventional Norwegian furniture to see the light of day in 1960s must have been the pieces in plastic-reinforced cardboard designed by interior designer Terje Meyer.³⁴ According to Meyer, the idea was to develop furniture that would be as cheap as possible, primarily aimed at young people. The solution was not to cut corners in conventional furniture production, but to think outside the box, the young designer proclaimed. After eagerly promoting his ideas in *Bonytt*, he managed to get a manufacturer on board.³⁵ And just as the material and concept was unconventional, so was the manufacturer and the retailer: the packaging manufacturer Strongpack A/S produced the cardboard furniture, and it was sold through the fancy boutique Bobolina in Oslo. [Figure 17-3] Given that they could offer an arm-chair for NOK 40,- and an easy chair for NOK 70,-, Meyer must be said to have reached his goal of making furniture "so cheap that they can be thrown away when you get tired of them".³⁶ Despite the very low prices, the cardboard furniture never became a big seller and the production was soon discontinued.

How this disposable furniture fitted in the emerging debate on environmental awareness is another story, but Meyer did become involved in this debate when he shortly after participated in a project for the development of a electrical van. Terje Meyer and Bjørn A. Larsen were hired to design the glass-fibre armed polyester body of this peculiar aluminium frame vehicle developed by Einar Kjelland-Fosterud and his fellow engineers. The project was funded by the Ministry of Industry, and environmental concerns were a prime mover in the project in addition, of course, to industrial development. Three vehicles were built at Strømmens Værksted around 1970, but any series production never came about.³⁷

33. Clayhills, *op.cit.* ("Men så har man da den steile og brysomme *Edvin Helseth* som et hår i suppen. Han som ikke vil lage fine møbler")

34. It is worth mentioning, though, that Meyer's designs bore evident resemblances to some British furniture manufactured by Hull Traders Furniture Ltd. and designed by Bernhard Holdaway in 1965. Like Meyer's, this was also made out of cardboard cylinders, and it is highly plausible that it influenced the Norwegian designer. When the Hull Traders/Holdaway furniture was presented in *Bonytt* in 1967, Liv Schjødt described it as the Beatles of the furniture world and stated that "One can envision the 'short-skirted' and the 'long-haired' youth take their place in these chairs, around these tables listening to modern music.": Liv Schjødt, "En ny stil?" in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 126 ("Man kan se for seg den 'kortsjørtede' og den 'langhårede' ungdom ta sin plass i disse stoler, rundt disse bord og lytte til tidens musikk.")

35. Else Margrethe Engen, "Ung designer søker sin produsent" in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 218-219

36. N.N., "Billige pappmøbler" in *nye bonytt* No. 7, 1968, p 33 ("Så billige at de kan kastes når man blir lei av dem") A conventional easy chair in the lower price range cost about ten times as much. For instance—the *Siesta* chair manufactured by Vestlandske Møbelfabrikk and designed by Ingmar Relling, much applauded for its design for rational production and low shipment cost NOK 805,- in 1968: Gerd Hennem, "Markedet: Tradisjonelt—moderne" in *nye bonytt* No. 10, 1968, p 44

37. Einar Kjelland-Fosterud, "Den norske ELBIL" in Øistein Bertheau and Christian Stokke (eds.), *Made in Norway? Historien om forsøk på bilproduksjon i Norge* (Oslo: Norsk Teknisk Museum, 1991) p 250-255



Figure 17–3: Cardboard furniture (plastic-reinforced cardboard) Strongpack A/S, 1968. Designer: Terje Meyer. The photo shows the designer himself reclining in his cardboard easy chair in a meticulously styled and staged *nye bonytt* presentation of the product. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 28, 1968)

17.3 “We have teacups enough!”

The designer Roar Høyland—who joined the *Bonytt* editorial committee in 1965, and began teaching design methodology at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) in 1968—developed a strong passion for the contextual morality and responsibility of design from the mid-1960s. As an indication of this disposition, it might be mentioned that he was on the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) jury that hailed the *Trybo* furniture.³⁸ When interviewed

by his *Bonytt* colleague Harriet Clayhills, he proclaimed with great pathos that “[i]t is irresponsible to use design as a selling point for any given sofa bed model.”³⁹ To Høyland, real design was a complex task not to be taken lightly. Social and human requirements should always be its motivation and guideline, but designers could only succeed in changing our environment and society by acknowledging that design also was a decidedly profane and worldly activity:

We must break free of regarding design as merely a drawing task. Technology and economy enter the picture, it is a question of analyses, tests and trials... The designer must in collaboration with technicians, engineers and economists have a grounding on which to promote his ideas.⁴⁰

Høyland thus seemed to envision the designer as a figure in which pietistic morals, social responsibility and aesthetic culture joined forces with rational thought, technological know-how and business instinct. In other words, he saw the designer as a great Renaissance Man—much like a hybrid of John Calvin and Leonardo Da Vinci, slightly genetically enhanced by contribution from Karl Marx. Another important point for Høyland was to purge design of its snobbish tendencies. The designers should engage in projects aiming to solve “real” problems for “real” people living in the “real” world. The cultural and social impact of a product was proportional to its affordability, proliferation, and number and frequency of product-user interactions. Thus, improving the design of a milk carton was according to Høyland much more important than to design yet another beautiful and expensive chair.⁴¹

This attitude can be said to have reached its zenith when Høyland in 1968 began teaching form and design methodology in the metal class at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) and hung a poster in the classroom that said “We have teacups enough!” (“*Vi har tekopper nok!*”).⁴² In other words; designers had more pressing tasks at hand. This highly symbolic act may be seen as an attempt at a final showdown with the old Paulssonian idea of *more beautiful everyday goods* (*vackrare vardagsvara*) which for half a century now had been such a dominant idiom in Nordic design.⁴³ The irony is that the act took place the very year the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, and at a school which had been the breeding ground for the applied art movement in Norway. Two decades later, Høyland even became head master of the school.⁴⁴

38. The other jury members were: Tormod Alnæs, Arne Lindaas and Kaj Franck—with Alf Bøe as secretary: Bøe, *op.cit.* p 51

39. Roar Høyland interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “‘Design = Ekonomi’ og kultur” in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 279 (“Det er uansvarlig å bruke design som salgsargument for en hvilken som helst modell av en sovesofa.”)

40. *Ibid.* p 278-279 (“Vi må komme bort fra å betrakte design som en ren tegneoppgave. Her kommer teknikk og økonomi inn, det er spørsmål om analyser, tester og prøver... Designeren må i samarbeide med teknikere, ingeniører og økonomer ha et grunnlag å stå på for å fremme sine idéer.”)

41. *Ibid.* p 277-282

42. Roar Høyland in conversation with the author, 28.03.2007

43. The term was coined by the Swedish art historian Gregor Paulsson in 1919: Gregor Paulsson, *Vackrare Vardagsvara* (Stockholm: Svenska Slöjdföreningen, 1919)

The art historian and writer Gerd Hennem, who occasionally freelanced for *Bonytt*, announced a remarkably radical stand on the social and political responsibilities of design when she interviewed the young American designer Edward Hubbard Yonkers and entitled the article: “Design—A Wealth Phenomenon in the Rich Part of the World” (“Design—Et velstandsfenomen i den rike del av verden”). Yonkers, a graduate of the Institute of Design at Illinois Institute of Technology, had at the time of his 1968 visit in Oslo spent two years in India trying to apply his design expertise to the fundamental problems and primary needs of a developing country.⁴⁵ Deeply moved by the young American’s commitment and devotion, Hennem wrote that:

The industry to which design can be applied in the rich countries often produces products which do not fulfil the consumers’ *genuine* needs, but the fictitious needs created by PR and advertisement and are necessary in order to keep the machinery of wealth going.⁴⁶

Hennem quoted Yonkers on the assertion that the way the economic system of the Western world exploited industrial design

can seem quite absurd even to a designer when seen in relation to the fundamental needs of the major part of the world’s population. It is essential that we think in a global context if we are to survive.⁴⁷

That an American designer should come to Norway preaching the gospel of design as a tool for solving “real” problems for the “real” world, even promoting design as aid to developing countries must have been somewhat surprising to the Norwegian design community given the reputation much American design had in European design circles for being excessively commercialist.⁴⁸

Nine years after Knut Fægri wrote “‘The Designer’—the 11th Plague” where he accused the designer of being the devil’s advocate through selling his services as fashionism or styling to an industry who was stuck in a spiralling quest for profit, some of his central arguments were taken up in *Bonytt*—but nor this time was it by someone belonging to the design community. An article entitled “The Sales Carousel” (“Omsetningskarusellen”), a critique of the consumption society appeared in an otherwise quite de-ideologized *nye bonytt*.⁴⁹ The author was Erik Dammann, who was

44. Høyland headed the school’s metal department from 1983 to 1989, and was head master from 1989 to 1996. In this connection it is interesting to note that despite this quite radical stance, Høyland too came from the “conventional” applied art community. Not only was he a member of the *Bonytt* editorial committee from 1965—he even worked at the applied art colony PLUS in Fredrikstad (albeit in its more “industry-friendly” division, designing e.g. various plastic products) and was the institution’s art director from 1962 to 1965: Wenche Anette Johannessen, *Brukskunst-senteret PLUS—Per Tannums ønske om å etablere et designsentrum* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000) p 88-89 and Petter Henriksen *et al.* (eds.), *Aschehoug og Gyldendals store norske leksikon* [3. ed.] (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1995-1999) Vol. 7, p 359

45. Gerd Hennem [sic], “Design—Et velstandsfenomen i den rike del av verden” in *nye bonytt* No 8/9, 1968, p 62-65

46. *Ibid.* p 63 (“Den industri som design kan applikeres på i de rike land, fremstiller ofte produkter som ikke oppfyller forbrukernes *virkelige* behov, men de fiktive behov, som er skapt av PR og reklame og som er nødvendige for å holde velstandsmaskineriet i gang.”)

47. Edward Hubbard Yonkers interviewed in *Ibid.* (“kan fortone seg temmelig absurd til og med for en designer, når det sees i relasjon til de fundamentale behov, som gjelder for den største del av verdens befolkning. Det er helt nødvendig at vi tenker i en global sammenheng hvis vi skal overleve.”)

about to become one of Norway's most dedicated, radical and idealistic promoters of social change in the 1970s. In the late 1960s, having become disillusioned with the consumerism his job at an advertising agency required him to promote, Dammann moved with his family to the small island of Savai in West-Samoa to live among the natives for half a year. He was so struck by the traditional Polynesian culture of sharing and distribution that the stay changed his life. Back in Norway he left advertising for good and dedicated his life to promoting a better world, an alternative society based on cooperation, sharing and experiences in stead of liberal market economy, competition and consumption. In Dammann's criticism, just as it had been in Fægri's, the designer was one of the principal targets:

The main problem for the restless consumers of the West is not just that there are too many advertisements, but just as much that there are too many material goods to advertise for. The affluence is not created by advertisement, but by industrial researchers, product developers and industrial designers, by engineers, chemists, artisans and architects—all those who work in production and commodity trade. Of course, there is nothing wrong in producing and selling goods that bring the buyer pleasure and enrich his way of life. The problem is that a substantial part of the goods that are manufactured today are *not* produced to give the buyer increased satisfaction in the long run, but to make him dissatisfied with what he already has, so that he will replace his possessions at an ever increasing rate... Of course there are designers who primarily strive to create timeless products that simply have good and functional form. The problem is that they are a minority.⁵⁰

In addition to the striking similarities between the two criticisms, there is also an important difference. As shown above, Fægri, despite strong indications to his expertise and interest in ecology and resource management, made no explicit link between these concerns and the commodity production he criticised. Dammann, on the other hand, made

48. Just how progressive the ideas advocated in Hennem's piece on Hubbard Yonkers becomes apparent when recalling that the article appeared about the same time as Victor Papanek—whose views were hardly typically American although he himself might be considered American (by adoption, though not by birth)—first began guest lecturing at the design school Konstfack in Stockholm, but three years *before* his book *Design for the Real World* was published in English (and two years before its original Swedish edition). *Design for the Real World* is not primarily about design in the third world, but is generally considered to be the first major publication to touch upon the topic, followed by the more specialised studies by Gui Bonsiepe throughout the 1970s: H. Alpay Er, "Development Patterns of Industrial Design in the Third World: A Conceptual Model for Newly Industrialized Countries" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997 p 295. Bonsiepe later sketched an outline for a history of industrial design in developing countries (chiefly India and South American countries): Gui Bonsiepe, "Developing Countries: Awareness of Design and the Peripheral Condition" in Carlo Pirovano (ed. in chief), *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 3: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design* (Milano: Electa, 1990) p 252-269

49. Erik Dammann, "Omsetningskarusellen" in *nye bonytt* No. 1, 1971, p 16-17 & 28

50. *Ibid.* p 17 ("Hovedproblemet for vestens rastløse forbrukere er ikke bare at det er for mange annonser, men like meget at det finnes for mange materielle goder å annonsere for. Overfloden skapes ikke av reklamen, men av industriforskere, produktutviklere og industridesignere, av ingeniører, kemikere, brukskunstnere og arkitekter—alle som arbeider innen produksjon og varehandel. Selvfølgelig er det ikke noe negativt i å produsere og selge varer som gir kjøperen glede og beriker hans tilværelse. Problemet er at en vesentlig del av de varer som produseres i dag *ikke* er fremstilt for å gi kjøperen økt tilfredsstillelse på lang sikt, men for å gjøre ham misfornøyd med det han allerede har, slik at han skal skifte ut sine ting i stadig raskere tempo... Selvfølgelig finnes det formgivere som først og fremst går inn for å skape tidløse ting som rett og slett har god og funksjonell form. Problemet er at de er i mindretall.")

it clear that it was precisely ecology and resource management together with social justice, humanist values and natural- and cultural experiences that motivated his critique.⁵¹ Though striking, this difference between Fægri and Dammann is hardly surprising, as much changed both in terms of political climate, knowledge production and public mentalities between 1962 and 1971. As for Dammann, he continued his work throughout the 1970s and beyond. In 1972 he published a book called *The Future in Our Hands* (*Fremtiden i våre hender*), where he portrayed the glaring inequality of living conditions between the developing countries and the West, and argued for a society of reduced production and consumption and a more fair distribution of resources.⁵² The book formed the basis for the establishment two years later of the environmental organization/movement bearing its name, which grew during the 1970s to have over 25,000 members and a considerable political influence.

Dammann's critique seems to correspond with contemporary campaigns elsewhere as well. In Germany, the philosopher Wolfgang Haug indicted design of serving as the "Red Cross of capitalism" in his *Kritik der Warenästhetik* (*Critique of Commodity Aesthetics*) from 1971.⁵³ A similar and contemporary, but far more disseminated critique of design as the lackey of consumer society was offered by the Austrian/American design theoretician Victor Papanek in his famous book *Design for the Real World*.⁵⁴ Having been published in Swedish a year *before* the English version appeared—Papanek was a guest lecturer at the arts and crafts college *Konstfack* in Stockholm from 1968 to 1970—these radical ideas found a ready audience among the more progressive elements of the Scandinavian design community.⁵⁵

During a trip to Stockholm just after he began teaching at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS), Roar Høyland met Papanek and promptly invited him to Oslo. Papanek accepted, and stayed for a week as a guest at Høyland's house, while giving all-day lectures attracting virtually every student at SHKS. Theory was accompanied by action: Papanek and Høyland staged an event where they and their students redesigned and transformed a notoriously neglected and polluted communal back yard in one of the city's less privileged neighbourhoods

51. *Ibid.* p 16-17 & 28

52. Erik Dammann, *Fremtiden i våre hender* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1972). English edition: Erik Dammann, *The Future in Our Hands* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979)

53. Wolfgang Haug, *Kritik der Warenästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971) p 137. English translation: Wolfgang Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986). Another German critical but less polemic discussion of design's role in society appeared two years later in: Gert Selle, *Ideologie und Utopie des Design: zur gesellschaftlichen Theorie der industriellen Formgebung* (Köln: DuMont, 1973)

54. Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human ecology and social change* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971)

55. Victor Papanek, *Miljön och miljonerna: design som tjänst eller förtjänst?* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1970). On his lecturing at Konstfack, see: Lasse Brunnström, "Från konst och teknik till industriell design" in Lasse Brunnström (ed.), *Svensk industridesign: en 1900-talshistoria* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1997) p 39 and Kerstin Wickman, "Industridesign" in Gunilla Widengren (ed.), *Tanken och handen: Konstfack 150 år* (Stockholm: Page One Publishing, 1994) p 286 & 294-295. Papanek developed a close relation to Scandinavia. In the 1970s, Papanek also lectured at the The Royal Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture, Copenhagen: Hans-Christian Jensen, *Fra velfærd til designkultur—Velfærdsengagementet i dansk designteori og designpraksis i det 20. århundrede* [Doctoral dissertation] (Odense: Syddansk Universitet, 2005) p 52

into a more agreeable recreational area, complete with a playground, furnishings, greenery and all. This stunt even made it onto the TV news.⁵⁶ So, already in 1968, two years before the first version of his famous book was published, Norwegian design students were presented with Papanek's radical ideas on the social and moral responsibility of design.

That part of the design discourse was moving in this direction was of course no isolated process, but a shifting in the *seamless web of sociodesign*. A good illustration of this is the sense of (need for) change felt so strongly in many progressive parts of society at large, described quite poignantly by the novelist Dag Solstad who let his radical historian protagonist recall the sentiment of 1971: "I suspected that modernity had changed from aesthetics to politics, from art to revolution".⁵⁷

17.4 *nye bonytt*: From fervent advocacy to friendly advise

In an editorial in the last *Bonytt* issue of 1967, Arne Remlov presented the outline for some quite drastic changes in the magazine's character:

On February 1st [1968] we present a New Bonytt, more oriented towards providing service to the individual reader who struggles with home- and furnishing questions. We will more than before inform about what of interest exists on the Norwegian market in this field and give more room for furnishing problems, whether they occur in the town apartment or in the cottage. This is made possible because we from 1968 get some more pages than before, we have been able to take on new associates, and that we from this time on shift to offset which gives us more colours on our editorial pages... As a matter of form, we stress that this reorientation does not mean any rupture with Bonytt's former line... We will still be the only magazine [in Scandinavia] which aims to be a magazine for architecture, interior design, art, applied art and industrial design, and we will still be the official mouthpiece for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art.⁵⁸

Of course, giving amicable advice and suggestions on interior decoration had been part of *Bonytt*'s activities from the very beginning. But from now on, this would become the core activity, taking precedence over the function which has been the subject of the present study; its role as an arena for professional debate and mediation and negotiation of

56. Roar Høyland in conversation with the author, 28.03.2007

57. Dag Solstad, *Roman 1987* (Oslo: Oktober, 1987) p 244 ("Jeg hadde en mistanke om at moderniteten hadde skiftet fra estetikk til poletikk, fra kunst til revolusjon")

58. Arne Remlov, "Redaksjonelt" in *Bonytt* No 11/12, 1967, unpagged [app.] ("Den 1. februar kommer vi med et Nytt Bonytt [sic], mer innstilt på service overfor den enkelte leser som strever med bolig- og innredningsspørsmål. Vi vil i sterkere grad enn før orientere om det som finnes av interesse innenfor denne sektor på det norske marked og gi mer plass til innredningsproblemer, enten de nå melder seg i byteiligheten eller på hytta. Når vi blir istand [sic] til dette skyldes det at vi fra 1968 får noen sider mer enn vi har hatt tidligere, at vi har klart å knytte nye medarbeidere til oss og at vi fra dette tidspunkt vil gå over til offset som vil gi oss flere farver på våre redaksjonelle sider... For ordens skyld gjør vi uttrykkelig oppmerksom på at denne omleggingen ikke betyr noe brudd med Bonytts tidligere linje... Vi blir fremdeles det eneste tidskriftet [i Skandinavia] som har som målsetting å være tidskrift for arkitektur, boliginredning, kunst, brukskunst og industrial design, og vi vil fortsatt være det offisielle organ for Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst.")

ideology. I find it plausible that such a reorientation was motivated by a desire to reach a broader audience, and that a policy of “infotainment” was considered more likely to appeal to the general public, i.e. lay people.⁵⁹ There could not have been much room for expanding the circulation in the professional market. Judging from letters to the editor published in 1968, one can safely say that this strategy worked. One new reader who previously considered *Bonytt* an elitist and inaccessible publication for those in the know applauded the reorientation and was happy to discover that “it was no [longer] an advanced art magazine, but truly a genuine ‘home’ magazine.”⁶⁰ Many of the loyal readers of the “old” *Bonytt* were correspondingly disappointed and did not hesitate to notify the editors. A letter by the weaver Eva and the architect Ragnvald Bing Lorentzen proclaimed that

We know that the world is in continuous development... Other places we read about environmental debate, student riots, warfare, third world problems... And we open NYE BONYTT in order to find the designer’s commitment. We do not expect articles on politics and national economy, nor on generation gap antagonisms. But, BONYTT, we expect reactions within *your* sphere of influence.⁶¹

In short, the magazine quickly lost its reputation as an arena for debate and development of the design professions. The interior architect Kirsti Skogholt put it quite bluntly:

I am sorry to say that I think the development of *Bonytt* as a professional periodical is deteriorating, and the content is now more and more resemble that of popular woman’s magazines.⁶²

nye bonytt did not prove Bing Lorentzen and Skogholt wrong, nor did they try to. The closest thing to critical debate must have been a series of causeries by the philosopher Arild Haaland published in *nye bonytt* in 1969. In these texts, he pondered on fundamental and momentous topics like social fetichism, urban sprawl, choice as the structuring of chaos, children and urbanization, the momentum of generational change, the presence of the past, the social and cultural hazards of the economic rationale and the mechanics of value-based choice.⁶³ But, probably due to his being an academic philosopher not affiliated with the design community, Haaland’s contributions seem quite disconnected from the professional debate. He did not at any point reflect on the designer’s role in creation, handling or solving of the problems he raised. Haaland’s pensive and reflective

59. The British design historian Grace Lees-Maffei has argued that what she calls “advice literature” (like post-1968 *nye bonytt*) could be considered both more effective and more “democratic” or sensitive in its mediation of modern design than the top-down propaganda (like pre-1968 *Bonytt*) because its audience is much more active and receptive: Grace Lees-Maffei, “From Service to Self-Service—Advice Literature as Design Discourse, 1920-1970” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2001 p 187-206

60. Alan Langsem, “Herr redaktør!” in *nye bonytt* No. 6, 1968, p 2

61. Eva and Ragnvald Bing Lorentzen, “Kjære BONYTT!” in *nye bonytt* No. 6, 1968, p 2 (“Vi vet at verden er i en stadig utvikling... Andre steder leser vi om miljødebatt, studentopptøyer, krigføring, u-landsproblemer... Og vi slår opp i NYE BONYTT for å finne formgiverens engasjement. Vi venter oss ikke stoff om politikk eller nasjonaløkonomi, ei heller generasjonsmotsetningenes vanskeligheter. Men, BONYTT, vi regner med reaksjoner innen *ditt* influensområde.”)

62. Kirsti Skogholt, “Herr redaktør!” in *nye bonytt* No. 6, 1968, p 2 (“Jeg beklager at jeg synes *Bonytt*s utvikling går tilbake som fagtidsskrift, og nå mer og mer nærmer seg populære dameblad i innhold.”)

texts thus appeared more like extraneous matter in *nye bonytt* rather than spurring professional criticism and debate.⁶⁴

To emphasize the changes and symbolize the new era, the name of the magazine was altered to *nye bonytt* (*New Bonytt*). In the editorial cited above, Remlov identified three factors making the reorientation possible. Firstly, space: the magazine had now been given the financial possibilities or prospects to expand the number of pages.⁶⁵ That these were to be dedicated to information and advice on interior decoration rather than to debate and development of the design professions must be understood in light of the above suggested desire to reach a broader audience.

The second reorientation factor Remlov pointed to was new associates: Coinciding with the premiere of *nye bonytt*, Liv Schjødt stepped down after 21 productive years. She first came to the magazine in 1946 as subeditor, was made assistant editor in 1959 and co-editor from 1964, and had all along been one of the most published writers. In the transitional phase—the winter of 1967/1968—Schjødt was replaced by Else Margrete Engen.⁶⁶ She did not stay for long, however. From no. 4/5 1968 Asbjørn Andresen entered the scene as subeditor, and took over Engen's job as editor from no. 7 1968.⁶⁷ A fascinating side to Andresen is that he came from a job as journalist in the popular men's magazine *Vi menn*.⁶⁸ But he had also studied painting, and would later make a name for himself as a sculptor.⁶⁹ At about the same time, other long-standing and frequent contributors highly devoted to the cause—such as Bernt Heiberg, Knut Greve, Torolf Prytz, Ferdinand Aars, Arne E. Holm, Jens von der Lippe, Odd Brochmann, Harriet Clayhills, Alf Bøe and Roar Høyland—also disappeared (completely or virtually) from the magazine's columns. In their place came a new generation of writers—many of them interior designers and mostly women—who lacked the firm rooting in the applied art movement so prominent in their predecessors.

The third factor Remlov identified as contributing to the reorientation of the magazine was neither personal nor structural, but a technological one: the introduction of offset printing. It is interesting to note how Remlov presented the offset technology in this setting and the status he assigned to it. He seems to have considered it a non-human

63. Arild Haaland, "Ting og trang" in *nye bonytt* No. 2, 1969, p 2, Arild Haaland, "Om byen" in *nye bonytt* No. 4, 1969, p 30, Arild Haaland, "8 ytringer med utgangspunkt i kaos" in *nye bonytt* No. 5, 1969, p 2, Arild Haaland, "I begynnelsen var barnet" in *nye bonytt* No. 6, 1969, p 30, Arild Haaland, "Skape øde og elte" in *nye bonytt* No. 7, 1969, p 31, Arild Haaland, "Gammelt om nytt" in *nye bonytt* No. 8, 1969, p 26, Arild Haaland, "Klo, hode og åtsel" in *nye bonytt* No. 9, 1969, p 30 and Arild Haaland, "Verdimekanikk" in *nye bonytt* No. 10, 1969, p 43

64. The same can be said of two 1969 editorials by Asbjørn Andresen: He addressed problems of water and air pollution, but did not touch upon the role of design in the current environmental debate: Asbjørn Andresen, "Leder—Rene fjorder med private rensanlegg" in *nye bonytt* No. 7, 1969, p 1 and Asbjørn Andresen, "Leder—STOPP" in *nye bonytt* No. 8, 1969, p 1

65. It might be mentioned here that *Bonytt* in 1966 had received NOK 125.000,- from the Culture Fund (Kulturfondet) "for continued and intensified efforts." One can only wonder whether the Culture Fund would have approved of the forthcoming commercialisation of the magazine. Arne Remlov, "Nødvendigheten for orientering" in *Bonytt*, No. 10, 1966, unpagged ("til videre og intensivert arbeid.")

66. Arne Remlov, "Endringer i Bonytts redaksjon" in *Bonytt* No 11/12, 1967, unpagged [app.]

67. *nye bonytt* No. 4/5, 1968, p 1 and *nye bonytt* No. 7, 1968, p 1

68. Information supplied by Paul Brand in conversation with the author, 20.10.2005. The artist Brand—now a professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Art, Department of Architectural Design, Form and Colour Studies—did layout for *Bonytt* at the time.

69. <http://www.kulturnett.no/personer/person.jsp?id=T1450741> Information downloaded 20.10.2005

actor: The offset technology executed tasks—producing consistent high quality colour images rapidly and economically—which had been delegated to it, and its role in the reorganization process was presented more or less on a par with and interrelated to those played by human actors (new associates) as well as the structural factors involved (e.g. improved financial prospects).⁷⁰ Remlov bestowed significant agency to the new technology. He seemed to imply that there was some sort of natural causality between a more extensive use of colour illustrations afforded by the application of offset printing and the reorientation of the editorial policy towards an increased focus on interior decoration. [Figure 17-4]

Asbjørn Andresen left the editorial post after a couple of years and was replaced by Tore Giljane in the summer of 1970.⁷¹ After studying graphic design at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS), Giljane had entered the publishing business. This brought him to *Bonytt* in 1965 where he became a graphic designer and publishing editor for Forlaget Bonytt A/S, the publishers of the magazine.⁷² The fact that the new editor came from the publishing business and not from the sphere of design practitioners, educators and theoreticians is, I would assert, symptomatic of the professionalization (in terms of publishing), de-ideologization and popularization of *nye bonytt*.

The editorial committee with its composition from 1966—Alf Bøe, Roar Høyland, Nils Slaatto and Håkon Stenstadvold—remained in service throughout the three first volumes of *nye bonytt*; 1968 to 1970.⁷³ In light of what we have learned above about Høyland's increasingly critical attitudes towards the potential consumption driving aspects of design and Bøe's new job as director of the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) it may seem paradoxical that these two stayed on the editorial committee of *nye bonytt*. But the editorial policy and the contents did not change overnight—Remlov had maintained that the reorientation would “not mean any rupture with Bonytt's former line”.⁷⁴ Also, *nye bonytt* remained the official mouthpiece for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) until the end of 1970.⁷⁵ Moreover, the editorial committee now became much more secluded and less active than before. For instance, their total contribution in terms of published material to the 1968 volume consisted of four small pieces—two by Bøe and two by Stenstadvold—and nothing at all to the 1969 volume.⁷⁶

Ever since co-founder Per Tannum left *Bonytt* in the late 1940s, Arne Remlov had been the principal shareholder of the publishing company *Bonytt* A/S. In the late 1960s,

70. For an concise and eloquent discussion of the relation between human and non-human actors, their agencies and the delegation of tasks to such actors, see: Bruno Latour (under the pseudonym Jim Johnson), “Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer” in *Social Problems* Vol. 35, No. 3, June 1988, p 298-310

71. *nye bonytt* No. 5, 1970, p 68 and *nye bonytt* No. 6, 1970, p 72

72. *nye bonytt* No. 10, 1970, p 5

73. *nye bonytt* No. 10, 1970, p 76

74. Arne Remlov, “Redaksjonelt” in *Bonytt* No 11/12, 1967, unpagged [app.] (“...ikke betyr noe brudd med Bonytts tidligere linje”)

75. *nye bonytt* No. 10, 1970, p 76 and *nye bonytt* No. 1, 1971, p 78

76. “Alfabetisk innholdsregister” in *nye bonytt* Vol. 28, 1968, unpagged and “Alfabetisk innholdsregister” in *nye bonytt* Vol. 29, 1969, unpagged

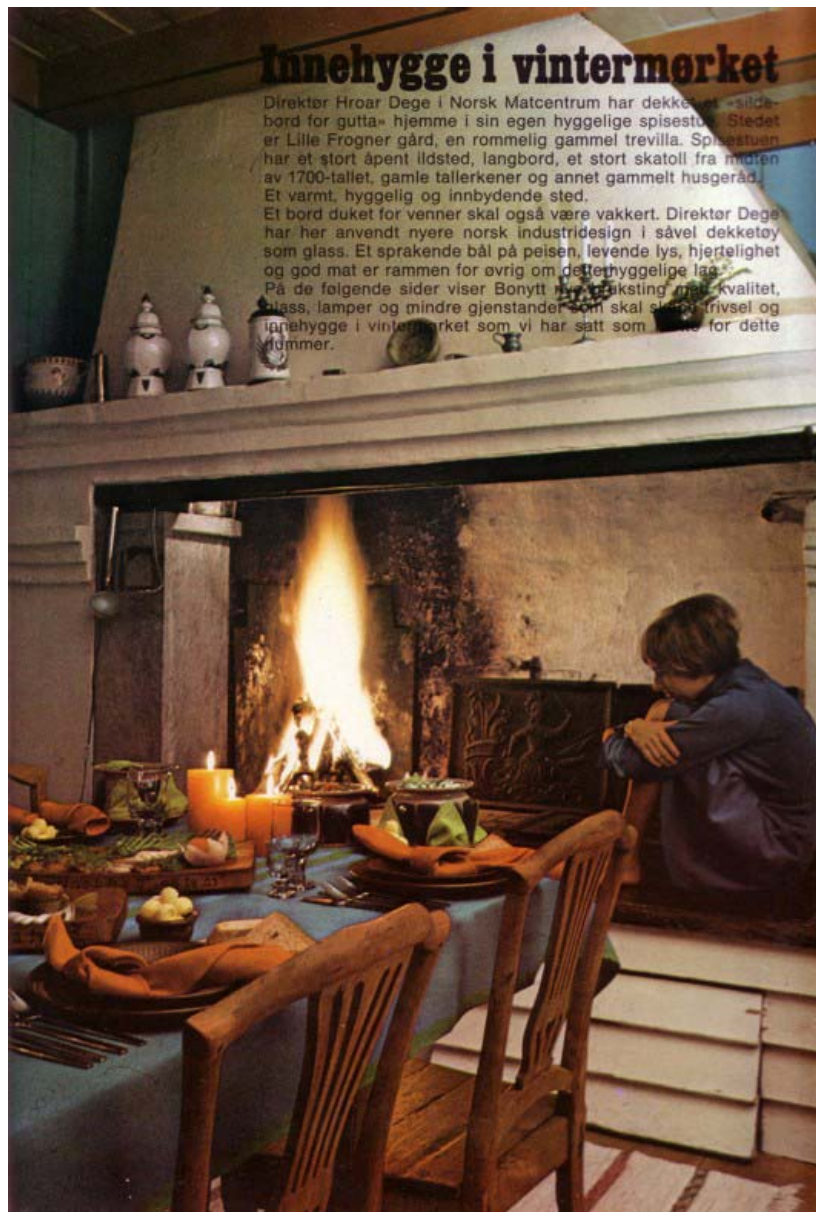


Figure 17–4: Spread from *nye bonytt* No. 11/12, 1968: The magazine utilized the offset printing technology to present appealing, meticulously styled, high quality photographic illustrations in colour of cosy and/or smart interiors as an important ingredient in the reorientation of the editorial policy from fervent professional advocacy towards friendly advice on interior decoration. The caption reads: “Indoor coziness in the winter darkness” (Innehygge i vintermørket)—a goal to be achieved by placing modern Norwegian tableware in rustic context.

the magazine felt an increasing competition from foreign design magazines, and colour printing was seen as an important in this respect. But the shift to offset printing was a costly process, and Remlov felt it was too risky and sold his shares.⁷⁷ I think it is safe to assume that these organisational changes also affected the editorial policy. Remlov stayed on as editor in chief until the spring of 1972, but wrote less and less articles and

77. Arne Remlov interviewed by Eldar Høidal, 04.11.1996 [Norsk møbelfaglig senter archive]

even left the editorials to Andresen, Giljane and the other new faces.⁷⁸ The interior architect Ranveig Getz was one of the new faces who would influence the new direction of the magazine. She joined *nye bonytt* early in 1970 as subeditor, but soon left this post to the graphic designer Tone Schultz and contributed as a freelance writer. From 1970 the photographer Bjørn Rines was hired.⁷⁹ This was the first time the magazine ever included a photographer in the editorial staff—hitherto the published pictures had come from various photographers and sources. Hiring a permanent photographer on a regular basis can be seen as a consistent choice given the reorientation of the editorial policy, as an attractive and coherent presentation of interiors and products now became of greater importance. This new focus on photography must also be seen in connection with the more extensive use of colour illustrations afforded by the shift to offset printing.

Another new member of the editorial staff from 1970 was the philologist Else Michelet.⁸⁰ She worked as a secretary at the publishers Forlaget Bonytt A/S, something which together with Giljane's dual role indicates that a very tight relation between the publishing house and the magazine's editorial staff was being forged. While the publishing house initially had been created as merely a subordinate, practical service function enabling the production and distribution of *Bonytt*, it seems it now had developed into a self-asserting independent entity. The editors used to fully control the publishers—now the balance of power seems to have been turned up-side down.

With the first issue of 1971, the reorientation of the magazine had not only been completed, but it had gone much further than what Remlov had proclaimed little over three years earlier. Despite his previous assurances, the agreement making the magazine the official mouthpiece for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) had now been terminated, leaving *nye bonytt* completely free from organizational affiliations and ideological regulations. Even the editorial committee—which from *Bonytt*'s very start had been composed of persons with impeccable design expertise, profound dedication and explicitly normative agendas—had been dissolved. The description of the magazine's scope which was published in every issue was also altered in 1971 from “Bonytt is [a] periodical for interior design, architecture, art, applied art and industrial design” to “Nye Bonytt, speciality magazine for house, home and interior design”.⁸¹ Gone was any mention of both applied art and industrial design. The focus had thus shifted from process to result, from profession to consumption, from advocacy to advice. In the first issue of 1971, editor Tore Giljane presented the manifesto of *nye bonytt* under the heading “our world of things” (“vår verden av ting”):

Today, the problem in Norway is no longer to procure necessities of life, but to choose in the jungle of the thing-world... It is a highly developed technological production system which more or less force the things on us. The organization of the thing-manufacturers is

78. *nye bonytt* No. 4, 1972, p 94. Remlov's last editorial was in *nye bonytt* No. 4/5, 1968, p 1

79. *nye bonytt* No. 10, 1970, p 5

80. *nye bonytt* No. 8, 1970, p 68 and *nye bonytt* No. 10, 1970, p 5

81. *nye bonytt* No. 11/12, 1968, p 13 (“Bonytt er tidsskrift for boliginnredning, arkitektur, kunst, brukskunst og industrial design”) and *nye bonytt* No. 3, 1971, p 46 (“Nye Bonytt, spesialblad for hus, hjem og boliginnredning”)

tied to the demand for ever increasing profit in order to meet the competition, the obligations to the creditors, the employees and society. Based on this, we believe it is more important to ask; “what can I get by with”, than “how much must I have”. A wise man has once said: “Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.” This quote can function as a motto for the policy we will follow... We wish to help our reader to choose... i.a. by... focusing more on consumer advice... [and] giving our readers detailed answers to the small and big furnishing problems they care to ask us about.⁸²

Pointing to a hundred years old quote from William Morris as the motto for *nye bonytt* may seem rather strange, but also highly illustrative. The manifesto opens with statements that indicate an attitude towards the industry and market which appears just as resigned and pessimistic as that of Morris.⁸³ Furthermore, the quote is indicative in that its concern is limited to the domestic sphere. This conforms to the new description of the magazine’s scope as being reduced from “interior design, architecture, art, applied art and industrial design” to “house, home and interior design”.⁸⁴ Editor Tore Giljane’s promise to help the readers to solve their home decoration problems thus explicitly marked the transition of *nye bonytt* from an arena for fervent advocacy and professional debate to a forum for inspiration and friendly advice.⁸⁵

17.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored two very different ways in which new and quite radical developments made a bid at *clearing the agenda* and helped *reconfiguring design cultures*. The first concerned (re)forming the message and consisted of radical design ideals that now and again emerged or surfaced in the Norwegian design community in the 1960s and to various degrees influenced design discourse. The second concerned (re)forming the medium and consisted of the drastic transformation of the professional design periodical *Bonytt* into the popular interior decoration magazine *nye bonytt* at the end of the decade.

82. Tore Giljane, “Vår verden av ting” [editorial] in *nye bonytt* No. 1, 1971, p 13 (“I dag er ikke problemet i Norge lenger å skaffe tilveie livsnødvendigheter, men å velge i ting-verdenens jungel... Det er et høyt utviklet teknisk produksjonsapparat som mer eller mindre tvinger tingene på oss. Ting-produsentenes apparat er bundet til kravet om stadig stigende avkastning for å kunne møte konkurransen, forpliktelsene overfor kreditorene, de ansatte og samfunnet. På denne bakgrunn tror vi at det er viktigere å spørre; “hva kan jeg klare meg med”, enn “hvor meget må jeg ha”. En vis mann har en gang sagt: “Ha intet i ditt hus som du ikke vet er nyttig eller mener er vakkert.” Dette sitat kan stå som motto for den linje vi vil arbeide etter... Vi ønsker å hjelpe vår leser til å velge... bl.a. ved å... satse på mer forbrukerveiledning... [og] gi våre lesere utfyllende svar på de små og store innredningsproblemer de måtte ønske å spørre oss om.”)

83. One can only assume, then, that their resignation and pessimism was based on a recognition similar to that which William Morris had made a century earlier—that his own success as a designer and business man relied on the very same commercialism and industrialism he so despised: Gillian Naylor, “Great Britain: Theoricians, Industry and the Craft Ideal” in Carlo Pirovano (ed. in chief), *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 2: 1851-1918 The Great Emporium of the World* (Milano: Electa, 1990) p 117

84. *nye bonytt* No. 11/12, 1968, p 13 (“boliginredning, arkitektur, kunst, brukskunst og industrial design”) and *nye bonytt* No. 3, 1971, p 46 (“hus, hjem og boliginredning”)

The first part of the chapter followed some of the scattered evidence of the development of a more radical design ideology in the course of the 1960s. These various occurrences came to the fore from different positions, were quite heterogeneous in character and represented a range of agendas. One should thus be careful not to exaggerate their congruity as elements in a greater movement, but it is still interesting to ask whether they can be said to converge towards the more terse petition for a design for the *real* world.

The last part of the chapter analysed the sudden change of character and scope of Norway's major design periodical *Bonytt*. A set of different factors, such as a new generation of writers, technological changes, sharpened competition in the market place and a new and more commercially motivated publishing policy, combined to bring about a comprehensive reconfiguration of the publication at the end of the 1960s.

This chapter concluded the investigation of *Bonytt* as the mediator of how the Norwegian design community domesticated ideology and transformed ideas of what modern design was, could and should be. The next section and the remaining chapters will for the last time turn to the second site of domestication; Figgjo and its design practice. In response to the new conditions for industry and in dialogue with the above discussed developments in design ideology and the Norwegian design community, Figgjo began *clearing the table* for a new and more focused business model and design strategy, and would in their way take part in *reconfiguring design cultures*.

85. My representation of this transition process around 1970 can perhaps be interpreted as somewhat overstated, inordinate or simplified. One can of course adduce evidence to indicate that remains of the "old regime" can be found in *nye bonytt* beyond 1971, but for the sake of stringency and scope I have chosen not to elaborate on this. Also, the 1971 *nye bonytt* manifesto can be interpreted slightly more along the lines of social criticism or at least consumption criticism ("ask; "what can I get by with", [rather] than "how much must I have"), and in the manifesto Giljane also mentioned intentions to debate environmental issues. These aspects are clearly present in *nye bonytt* in the early 1970s—one example is the article on consumption criticism by Erik Dammann—one of Norway's most dedicated, radical and idealistic promoters of social change in the 1970s—mentioned above: Erik Dammann, "Omsetningskarusellen" in *nye bonytt* No. 1, 1971, p 16-17 & 28

Section B:

Clearing the table

18 Forms of flexibility:

Designing rational and fashionable tableware

18.1 Introduction

When we left Figgjo last time, we saw that the new economic politics of expanding international free trade around 1960 were posing some serious challenges to the company. This and the following chapters will investigate how Figgjo reoriented themselves and transformed their activities in order to cope with these significantly altered circumstances as well as with some of the above discussed developments in design ideology and other new social and cultural trends of the period. How could Figgjo manage the transition from being a major actor in a minor market to becoming a minor actor in a major market? Faced with harder competition and more discerning consumers, was it possible to design tableware that was both rational to produce and fashionable to use? This first chapter will focus on how the company worked to rationalise their production by implementing new market, design and product strategies.

The first half of this chapter will analyse how Figgjo redirected their market, design and product strategies through curtailment and cultivation. In the brave, new world of international free trade, it was neither rational, desirable, nor possible for a small company in a high-cost country in the outskirts of the free trade area under construction to supply “something for everyone”. A small fish in a big pond needs to be quick and smart in order to survive, the management seems to have reasoned. Figgjo intended to become quick by curtailing their product portfolio and smart by cultivating a few flexible design concepts.

The second half of this chapter will take a closer look at the implementation of the new design strategy. As tableware was (and is) a product category highly susceptible of stylistic trends and consumers’ general tastes and aesthetic preferences, visual product differentiation becomes utmost important to this industry. This concern, weighed against the need for cost-efficient production, led Figgjo to develop a new basis for a more rational product differentiation that consisted of a small number of (new) service models that could be combined with a wide range of decors.

18.2 Redirecting product strategy: curtailment and cultivation

As we have seen, Figgjo’s design strategy of the 1950s, epitomized as “something for everyone”, resulted in an oversized product portfolio. As sales manager Harald Torgersen put it:

We have gotten into a situation where the product range is so big that it actually renders planning completely impossible... The number of articles... is so large that it nearly buries us. It has in this regard been asserted that we should just cut half the assortment. That is not possible with the sales territory we operate today because it would reduce sales too much. So, by expanding the sales territory we could limit the assortment, and hence perhaps facilitate a more stable production and increased possibilities for economic progress.¹

In preparation for the tougher competitive situation of the 1960s, then, the company management made important strategic revisions and enforced some quite drastic measures at the turn of the decade. The product portfolio was drastically reduced by discontinuing the most labour-intensive and unprofitable products. For instance, this process meant the end of the most traditionalistic designs as well as the more ephemeral/faddish ones. These measures also meant that the efficiency of the factory could be improved through longer production runs, better plant organisation, less waiting time and better order in the departments, and enhanced possibilities for detailed planning.² On this matter, the rationale employed by the Figgjo management received support from the Labour Management Institute (Institutt for Arbeidsledelse—IAL) who coaxed Figgjo managers in the virtues of specialised production at a business management course in 1960.³ Labour efficiency surveys and courses in productivity and business economics were arranged to ensure the implementation of these efficiency improvement measures, and both production planning as well as a continued focus on mechanization and automatization were time and again highlighted as crucial aspects in the quest for efficiency.⁴

By and large, Torgersen's analysis and proposal was accepted: The production was made more efficient and rational through fewer models and larger series/runs, and increased export efforts were to make up for any loss of sales resulting from the reduced product portfolio. West Germany was singled out as a priority export market based on a market analysis carried out in collaboration with the two other Norwegian earthenware factories (Stavangerflint and Egersund) and a Ministry of Industry committee, and plans for a joint venture export campaign were made. In 1960 the export ratio was 12-15%, and the Figgjo management set the goal at 25-30%.⁵ This goal was soon accomplished:

1. Report from sales manager Harald Torgersen included in Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 06.10.1959 (Figgjo archive) ("Vi er kommet i den stilling at vareutvalget er så stort at det faktisk umuliggjør planlegging i det hele... Artikkelnumrene [sic]... er så stort at det holder på å begrave oss. Det har i den anledning vært hevdet at vi skulle bare skjære bort halve utvalget. Det er ikke mulig med det salgsområdet vi idag arbeider på fordi vi derved ville få forlite [sic] salg. Altså ved å utvide salgsområdet kunne vi begrense utvalget, og derved kanskje muliggjøre en stabilere [sic] produksjon og større muligheter for økonomisk fremgang.")
2. Minutes from the management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 18.01.1960 (Figgjo archive). The importance of increasing the productive efficiency and reducing manufacturing costs was augmented by the fact that the standard working week in 1959 had been reduced from 48 to 45 hours, resulting in higher labour costs: Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meetings 21.06.1960 and 20.09.1960 (Figgjo archive)
3. Minutes from business economics course 29.02.-04.03.1960 (Figgjo archive)
4. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 20.09.1960 (Figgjo archive), Ragnar Grimsrud, *Omkring problemet: Ned med leverinstiden.* [sic], [internal memo] 08.10.1963, Minutes from productivity course 01.-04.02.1960 (Figgjo archive) and Minutes from business economics course 29.02.-04.03.1960 (Figgjo archive)

by 1962 the export ratio had risen to 25%,⁶ in 1964 it had reached 30%,⁷ and in 1966 ca. 40%.⁸ [Figure 18-1]



Figure 18–1: Operating on an international market meant new challenges in many fields. Here, Figgjo representatives trying to sway potential customers at a 1964 trade fair (probably in Frankfurt). (Photo from Figgjo archive)

In 1966, assisted by the Norwegian Export Council (Norges eksportråd), Figgjo's sales manager Harald Torgersen, Egersund's general manager Børge Svanes and Stavangerflint's managing director Sigurd Jensen visited New York, Chicago and Montreal with the purpose to increase exports to the highly lucrative North American market through better and more strategic distribution.⁹ In their report to the Ministry of

5. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 23.03.1960 (Figgjo archive)

6. Harald Lima interviewed in N.N., "Harald Limas bedrift" in *Stavangeren*, 20.01.1962

7. N.N., "Bransjefolkene bør slå et slag for bordkulturen" in *Bergens Tidene*, spring 1964 (date left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive)

8. This last number refers to all three Norwegian earthenware factories, not just Figgjo: Harald Torgersen, Børge Svanes and Sigurd Jensen, *Rapport vedrørende reise U.S.A. og Canada i tidsrommet 7.-22. februar 1966* [Report to the Ministry of Industry] 25.02.1966.

9. Since the mid 1950s, there had been some export to this market, but it was too inefficiently organised and poorly planned to be profitable. The leading Norwegian business newspaper's North American correspondent reported back home from the three earthenware factory managers' visit: Richard Holmesland, "Tre norske fajansefabrikker gjør eksportfremstøt i USA og Canada" in *Norges handels og sjøfartstidende*, 10.02.1966

Industry, the three managers described their position with respect to the new situation in which Norwegian manufacturing industry found itself in the 1960s as follows:

The conditions on the domestic market have worsened as a result of the deregulation of imports and the reduction of customs within EFTA, and the process of readjustment this has extorted has been highly discernible for the individual factory, and resulted in reorganizations of production to larger series, intensified sales promotion, escalation of the design work, as well as investments in new machinery, equipment, export effort, etc. Considering the fact that the earthenware industry beforehand was regarded as a weak industry in the process of readjustment faced by Norwegian industry a few years back, it is with a certain pleasure one can state that it so far seems to be able to uphold its position in the competitive situation.¹⁰

This strategy of efficiency improvement through curtailment and cultivation of both processes and products seems to have been quite successful, then, in the first half of the 1960s. Not only did the export ratio steadily increase (although the effort to conquer the West German market was no unconditional success—Sweden, Denmark and Britain remained the largest export markets for Figgjo),¹¹ but the turnover grew 18% from 1964 to 1965,¹² and the sales grew about 12-15% from 1965 to 1966.¹³

This description may give the impression that Figgjo and the rest of the Norwegian earthenware industry had proved the sceptics and pessimists—internal as well as external—wrong, and that all three existing Norwegian earthenware factories could not only survive, but grow and prosper in the new world of free trade. This would be a somewhat distorted picture. The readjustment did not come without a price. For instance, the increased focus on mechanization and automatization, which was seen as indispensable in creating a competitive production in country with high labour costs, required heavy investments. Earthenware production was rapidly becoming a capital-intensive industry, making economy of scale an important issue in the business. The structure of the Norwegian earthenware industry, then—three independent, relatively small units with limited financial resources—became problematic.

As we have seen, the three Norwegian earthenware factories: Figgjo, Stavangerflint and Egersund—all situated in the Rogaland district—had began collaborating on export efforts at the end of the 1950s in the advent of a free trade situation. The media coverage of this venture shows that this collaboration was not only openly admitted, but even used

-
10. Harald Torgersen, Børge Svanes and Sigurd Jensen, *Rapport vedrørende reise U.S.A. og Canada i tidsrommet 7.-22. februar 1966* [Report to the Ministry of Industry] 25.02.1966 (“Forholdene på hjemmemarkedet har forverret seg på grunn av frigjøringen av importen og reduksjonen av tollene i EFTA, og den omstillingsprosessen som dette har fremtvunget har i høy grad vært merkbar for den enkelte fabrikk, og ført til omlegging av produksjon til større serier, mer intens salgsarbeide, utbygging av design-arbeide samt investeringer i nye maskiner, utstyr, eksportarbeide, m.m. I betraktning av at flintindustrien på forhånd var ansett å være en svak industri i den omstillingsprosessen næringslivet i Norge sto overfor for noen år tilbake, må en med en viss glede kunne konstatere at den hittil synes å kunne hevde sin plass i konkurransebildet.”)
 11. After years of trying to get a foothold in the West German market, Figgjo’s West German contacts and importers explained the problems with too high retail prices and insufficient interest from retailers: H.H., *Vedr.: Reise Holland, England, Belgia og Tyskland. Februar 1969* [Internal report] 03.03.1969
 12. Minutes from company committee (bedriftsutvalget) meeting 22.05.1966 (Figgjo archive)
 13. Harald Lima interviewed in N.N., “Fajanseindustrien i Rogaland har solgt for 24 mill. i 1966” in *Rogalans Avis*, 31.12.1966

for PR purposes.¹⁴ Around the same time, the three companies found it opportune to collaborate on other areas as well. An ad hoc forum where they could meet and discuss common problems and topics of mutual interest existed. This was by no means any secret, but it was not considered something of relevance to outsiders. A third form of collaboration which the companies—quite understandably—was less open about, was the rather extensive system of concerted price-setting practised from 1958 onwards. 1958 was a tough year for the industry due to the saturation of the domestic market and increased competition from imported goods, and the motivation for getting into concerted price-setting was to avoid an internal price-cutting war.¹⁵

Hence, it did not come out of the blue when Figgjo and Stavangerflint in 1963 began negotiations on a possible merger. A consultant was hired to assess the relative values of the companies, and the report proposed that the two parties should own 55,9% and 44,1% respectively of a merged company. Both managements and both boards favoured a merger in principle, but Stavangerflint had trouble coping with Figgjo's superiority, and the negotiations failed.¹⁶ When Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik in its eager to expand in 1964 and 1965 made a pass at both Stavangerflint and Figgjo, the earthenware factories considered this as a threat, and were more or less frightened back in negotiations with each other. However, once again they failed to reach an agreement. But when Porsgrund then looked to Egersund and in 1967 gained control over Norway's oldest existing earthenware factory (established in 1847—earthenware production since 1865), the prospect of being muscled out by this new alliance made Figgjo and Stavangerflint return to bilateral negotiations with greater determination than ever before. Constructive and detailed negotiations were held in the autumn of 1967, and the merger could be proclaimed and the new company Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S established from January 1. 1968.¹⁷

In a letter to the two companies' clients, the motivation behind the merger was explained as follows:

The purpose of the merger is to strengthen the companies' competitive power in future market situations, which one believes will require ever larger and stronger units both in terms of technological matters as well as those regarding sales and capital.¹⁸

As we can see, this reasoning is highly consistent with the situation analysed above: The relative soundness of both companies' economic situation and the optimism with regard

14. See e.g.: N.N., "Felles eksportframstøt for våre flintfabrikker" in *Romsdals Budstikke*, 15.12.1959

15. Ulf-E. Rosenberg, "Elsker, elsker ikke" in Ulf-E. Rosenberg (ed.), *Figgjo—Formet av entusiasme gjennom 60 år, 1941-2001* (Figgjo: Figgjo AS, 2001) p 45-46

16. When the merger years later became a reality, the scores seem to have evened out a little as the new, merged company were to be owned 53,8% by Figgjo and 46,2% by Stavangerflint.

17. Rosenberg, *op.cit.* p 46-50. In 1972, Porsgrund went at it again, but after two years of negotiation, Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S turned down their proposal for a merger which would have united the entire Norwegian ceramic tableware industry.

18. Harald Lima and Sigurd Jensen, *Meddelelse til våre kunder. Fusjonen mellom Figgjo Fajanse A/S og Stavangerflint A/S* [letter to clients], 01.12.1967 (Figgjo archive) ("Formålet med fusjonen er å styrke bedriftenes konkurransevne i fremtidige markedsforhold, som en mener vil kreve stadig større og sterkere enheter såvel hva det tekniske som det salgs- og kapitalmessige angår.")

to their own company's vitality which seems to have characterized both managements indicate that the merger did not result from any sort of crisis or despair, but was a proactive measure in preparation for a fiercer, more fragmented and demanding market situation. The merger can thus be seen as another step in the strategy of curtailment and cultivation of the production. This reasoning is apparent also in the press release, where the merger was characterized as "a [necessary,] radical rationalization of structure".¹⁹

Although, as we have seen, design manager Grimsrud had always been attentive to the market in terms of what he believed could sell, this reorganization also affected this side of the company's design strategy. But this sort of "playing it by ear" would not do any more—the relations between market and design now had to be formalized and institutionalized:

We must, to a higher degree than hitherto, mark sales as a development function, and a closer contact with the Design departments is thus necessary. The designers, on their end, must be receptive to the incentives of the Sales department, which require some sort of market research.²⁰

This is a clear indication that the sales department no longer limited their jurisdiction to questions regarding market strategy, distribution, marketing, etc., but sought greater direct influence on the product development process as well.²¹

The organizational results of the merger can briefly be described as follows: Stavangerflint's managing director Sigurd Jensen was made managing director of the merged company. Figgjo's managing director and chairman Harald Lima became working chairman. Figgjo's design manager Ragnar Grimsrud continued as design manager for the merged company, whereas Stavangerflint's design manager Kåre B. Fjeldsaa was made chief designer for the Stavanger plant. The company management was placed at Figgjo—a solution said to be "preliminary" and chosen for "practical/economic reasons", but which became permanent.²² The product portfolios were curtailed to get rid of competing/corresponding products—it was for instance decided that "the Stavanger department must as soon as possible discontinue their hotel [-ware] production."²³ The fact that the Figgjo plant got the company management as well as the production for the increasingly important professional market most probably contributed to the future development where the Stavanger plant quickly started to lose money for the company and was closed down in 1979.²⁴ The company name was then changed to the present Figgjo AS.²⁵ There can be no doubt, then, of who "won" the merger, as

19. Press release concerning the merger between Figgjo and Stavangerflint (Figgjo archive) ("En [nødvendig,] gjennomgripende strukturrasjonalisering")

20. Minutes from sales meeting (salgsmøte) 04.03.1968 (Figgjo archive) ("Vi må, i sterkere grad enn hittil, markere salget som utviklende funksjon, og det er bl.a. derfor nødvendig med en sterkere kontakt med Designavdelingene. Designerne må da også på sin side være åpne for Salgsavdelingens impulser, som forutsetter en eller annen form for markedsundersøkelse.")

21. This attitude was supported and encouraged also by the management consultants who were hired to evaluate the merged company's sales function: Simon Marcussen and Erling Olsen, *Salgsfunksjonen Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S* [M&O A/S Rapport nr.1], 13.10.1969, p 8-12 (Figgjo archive)

22. Harald Lima and Sigurd Jensen, *Meddelelse til våre kunder. Fusjonen mellom Figgjo Fajanse A/S og Stavangerflint A/S* [letter to clients], 01.12.1967 (Figgjo archive) ("Foreløpig... praktiske/økonomiske grunner")

Figgjo AS still exists and today manufactures tableware in vitreous china to a niche international professional market.

18.3 Fade to white: new basis for rational product differentiation

As shown above, Figgjo made some rather drastic changes regarding their market and product strategies around 1960 in preparation for the dramatically different market situation rapidly emerging. In terms of product portfolio, these measures included a massive cut in the number of models. Most of the older, traditionalistic models like the *Jarlsberg Marie* received the *coup de grâce* along with the more faddish ones. So, with the exception of a few veritable cash cows such as the yellow and blue versions of the 1954 *Morgedal Sissel* service remaining in production for years to come, Figgjo started the 1960s with a relatively clean slate. Seen in light of the company management's intensified preoccupation with rational production as their weapon of choice—alongside distinctive and attractive design—in the much dreaded competition from manufacturers in low-cost countries, the reduced and renewed product portfolio is best understood as an attempt at developing a new basis for a more rational product differentiation.

This new base was made up of three different service models: *Lade* (series number 800) launched in 1958, *Katedral* (series number 900) and *Nordkapp* (series number 1000)—both launched in 1960. Most Figgjo products for the private household market throughout the 1960s were decor variations on these three models. The three had a lot in common. *Lade* and *Katedral* were designed by Ragnar Grimsrud, whereas *Nordkapp* was the first model series designed by chief modeller Jørg Løve Nielsen.²⁶ They all had an unmistakably *modern* formal language, i.e. unornamented and characterized by

-
23. Harald Lima, Minutes from policy meeting 12.01.1968 (Figgjo archive) (“Stavangeravdelingen må snarest legge ned sin hotellproduksjon.”) The hotel ware was by far the most important and problematic in this respect. When it came to the products for the private household market, Stavangerflint developed under design manager Kåre B. Fjeldsaa in the 1960s a product range of a markedly different design character than that of Figgjo. The widely popular and acclaimed service *Brunette* is a good example of this distinct, rustic design. As Stavangerflint's managing director Sigurd Jensen put it: “We go for what in English-speaking countries is called the “casual living”-style”: Sigurd Jensen interviewed in N.N., “Leire, ild og menneskehånd” in *Stavanger morgenavis*, 27.11.1965 (“Vi satser på det som i engelsktalende land kalles for “casual living”-stilen”)
24. In 1969, management consultants were hired to analyse the company's sales organization and draft a market strategy for the merged Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S. In their report they specifically stress that “the interesting trend in this development is that the time to come seems to herald a bias towards the institutional household [market]” and that the customer-, retail-, and distribution structure of the professional market made it more surveyable, predictable and rational for the manufacturer to operate in. Regarding the allocation of the company administration to the Figgjo plant, the management consultants claimed to see “signs indicating that the balance [between Figgjo Fajanse and Stavangerflint] presently is tipped a bit too much in favour of FF”: Simon Marcussen and Erling Olsen, *Salgsfunksjonen Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S* [M&O A/S Rapport nr.1], 13.10.1969, p 2-4 & 11 (Figgjo archive) (“Det interessante utviklingstrekk her er at det i tiden fremover synes å kunne skje en vridning til fordel for storhusholdningene... balanseforholdet idag [sic] er forrykket noe for sterkt til fordel for FF”)
25. It might be mentioned here that 1979 also saw the end of Egersund Fayancefabrik. Porsgrund had lost a lot of money on the Egersund venture, and sold the factory to Finnish-Swedish Arabia-Rörstrand company in 1975. Egersund's own products were then discontinued, and the last four years the plant was used for making bisque for Arabia-Rörstrand's other factories.

simple, basic forms and clean, unbroken lines. The design differed in that while *Lade* (the “budget model” marketed as complete sets and sold in special cardboard boxes [Figure 18-2]) and *Katedral* had soft, rounded shapes, *Nordkapp* was more angular and edged in its silhouette. Another unifying trait is that all three were kept in white by using white/transparent glazing only. Plain white versions were never marketed, though—the white surface served as a “canvas” for the numerous different decors offered [Figure 18-3].

This notion of the model designs as a “canvas” for the decors is supported by the strict division of tasks and responsibilities between the model designers and the decor designers. First, the model designers did their job, and only when this process was completed did they pass it along to the decor designers who then “adorned” the “naked” artefacts. This means that the decor designers had no influence on the model designs, nor did the model designers have any say in how the models should be decorated.²⁷ This situation was commonplace in the industry, and at Figgjo it was considered natural, functional and satisfactory.²⁸

Whereas the mass from which traditional (continental) earthenware is made tended to be slightly yellowish in colour, Figgjo had by now developed an earthenware material that was—or at least; so they claimed—as white as porcelain. No wonder, then, that this achievement were to be displayed by using transparent glazing. Hence, gone was the highly effective and impressive, but in this connection obscuring, coloured clay mass coating technique which had brought Figgjo such success in the 1950s (*Sola Grete* and *Morgedal Sissel* in trendy, cheerful colours). So, after having introduced and profited greatly from the use of backdrop colours in the 1950s, one might say that Figgjo in the 1960s let the “canvas” of their products fade to white.²⁹

This new design feature, the lustrous whiteness, was also presented as a sign of superior quality in the marketing. An advertisement in a promotion/education/information booklet published by the Trade Council for Glass, Porcelain and Crockery (Bransjerådet for glass, porselen og stentøy) from around 1961 reads:

Figgjo has the product range for every need and every taste. Outstanding designers have created the elegant shapes and decors in line with modern requirements. The smooth mass, white as chalk, and the shimmering and bright glazing hallmarks that Figgjo also is a guarantee for durability and high technical quality.³⁰

26. Also *Nordkapp* is many places attributed to Grimsrud, but Løve Nielsen insists that this was his first major independent project as a designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen in conversation with the author, 01.03.2006

27. Given his multiple roles as both model designer, design manager and general manager, Ragnar Grimsrud did of course have a say also when it came to decor as he was cardinal to the company’s general design strategies and policies, but he did not exercise detail control over the decor department. So, in his capacity of model designer, he did not have any say in how the models should be decorated.

28. Jørg Løve Nielsen in conversation with the author, 01.03.2006

29. With the exception of a version of the *Nordkapp* model called *Sudan*, which had an overall matte black glazing.

30. Advertisement “vi setter bo med figgjo” in *Velkommen til bords* [promotion/education/information booklet] (Oslo: Bransjerådet for glass, porselen og stentøy, ca 1961) (Figgjo archive) (“Figgjo har utvalget til ethvert behov og for enhver smak. Fremragende brukskunstnere har skapt de lekke linjer og dekorer i takt med tidens krav. Den jevne, kritthvite masse og den tindrende rene og klare glasur er kjennetegnet på at Figgjo også er en garanti for holdbarhet og høy teknisk kvalitet.”)



Figgjo Fajanse A/S lanserer noe helt nytt i serviser. Vi presenterer her illustrasjon og slagord fra rikskampanjen.

Figure 18-2: Presentation photo of and advertisement for “the combi-set”: The service model number 800, *Lade* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1958. Designer: Ragnar Grimrud. Decor: *Edel*. (Photo and facsimile of advertisement from Figgjo archive)



Figure 18–3: Presentation photo of one the two new basic service models launched by Figgjo in 1960: Parts from the service model number 1000, *Nordkapp* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. Undecorated versions like the one shown here were never marketed, though. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

As this text reveals, the lustrous whiteness of the material alone was not perceived as desirable enough—even the most modern customer was thought to require some form of surface decor. In the editorial text of the booklet from which the advertisement is taken, this is presented almost like a deplorable fact:

Neutral porcelain and earthenware is so delicate in itself that it makes every dish more attractive... Flamboyant decors are best suited for informal tables and relatively simple dishes, but the colours must never compete with those of the food.³¹

And continues with a direct warning:

[W]atch out for flowers and gold on cheap cups... Choose instead a simple cup without too much decor and preferably without gold. Then You pay for the cup and the quality, not for false ornaments.³²

31. N.N., “Riktig bruk av porselen og flint” in *Velkommen til bords* [promotion/education/information booklet] (Oslo: Bransjerådet for glass, porselen og stentøy, ca 1961) (Figgjo archive) (“Nøytralt porselen og flint er så delikat i seg selv at det gjør alle retter mer innbydende... Farvesprakende dekorasjoner passer best til uformelle bord og forholdsvis enkle retter, men fargene må aldri konkurrere med matens.”)

32. Svein Landsverk, “Vil De kjøpe noe fornuftig?” in *Velkommen til bords* [promotion/education/information booklet] (Oslo: Bransjerådet for glass, porselen og stentøy, ca 1961) (Figgjo archive) (“pass opp for blomster og gull på billige kopper... Velg heller en enkel kopp uten for meget pynt og helst uten gull. Da betaler De for koppen og kvaliteten, ikke for falsk staffasje.”)

This peculiar blend of merchant propaganda and modernist aesthetic moralism aside, there can be little doubt that it was commercial considerations in the form of more or less well-founded assumptions about and knowledge of market trends and aesthetic preferences among the consumers that made Figgjo refrain from marketing undecorated version of their three new, white service models, but instead offer them with a selection of decors of very different character. This explanation is supported by a remark made by “a porcelain manufacturer” (made anonymous, but most likely a Porsgrund manager) reported in *The Consumer Report (Forbrukerrapporten)* published by the Consumers’ Council (Forbrukerrådet) complaining that merchants and customers unfortunately did not accept or appreciate the virtues of the completely undecorated, white service.³³ As for Figgjo, the question of *if* all their products should have decor was not even an issue.³⁴

Figgjo’s decor design strategy for the private household market in the 1960s can broadly be described through three categories: abstract patterns, figurative/naturalistic floral designs, and folkloristic motifs. The first two shall be given a brief presentation here, whereas the latter merits a more thorough discussion later.

By discontinuing their traditionalistic models in favour of the new, modern designs, Figgjo clearly ran the risk of losing important market shares in the sizable market segment seen to prefer traditionalistic products. The reason why they were willing to run that risk is to be found in the new market strategy where export rises to primacy. Whereas the traditionalistic models of the fifties sold well in the domestic market, they had no export potential, because their design did not in any way stand out from the myriads of similar products available all over the world. Experience clearly showed that it was the models of modern design, such as *Morgedal Sissel*, that generated export revenues. As the managing director of Stavangerflint, Sigurd Jensen (from 1968 managing director of the merged Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint), put it: “our chance at asserting ourselves lies primarily in our ability to renew ourselves in design.”³⁵ As we have seen, though, voices in the Norwegian design community was at this time criticising what was considered a trend in much current design; that of a craze for novel designs and the deterioration of local/regional/national characteristics of design in the wake of the dramatic internationalisation of industry and commerce taking place. It is thus only logic, then, that Stavangerflint’s design manager Kåre B. Fjeldsaa took his boss’ (Jensen) attitude one step further: “We must compete with our distinctive character, sell Norwegian design.”³⁶ Leaving the traditionalistic models behind was thus deemed a matter of necessity.

But model design is one thing—decor design quite another. So, the decision to offer the new, modern models also with figurative/naturalistic floral decors—a decor category previously applied predominantly to the traditionalistic models—can be interpreted as an

33. N.N., “Kopper og kar” in *Forbrukerrapporten*, 1962, p 23. Thus even Porsgrund offered also one of their most modernist products—the *Spire* service designed in 1952 by Konrad Galaaen—with a standard naturalistic floral decor strangely at odds with the model design.

34. Jørg Løve Nielsen in conversation with the author, 01.03.2006

35. Sigurd Jensen interviewed in Lz., “Stavangerflint” in *Stavangeren* 30.03.1963 (“vår mulighet for å hevde oss ligger først og fremst i vår evne til å fornye oss i design.”)

36. Kåre B. Fjeldsaa interviewed in N.N., “Leire, ild og menneskehånd” in *Stavanger morgenavis*, 27.11.1965 (“Vi må konkurrere med vår egenart, selge norsk design.”)

attempt at damage control: maybe nostalgic decor could make up for the lack of nostalgic forms in the eyes of some of the customers who preferred *Jarlsberg Marie* to *Morgedal Sissel*. Hence, Figgjo presented the *Lade* model with decors such as *Edel* [Figure 18-2], *Krokos* and *Astrid* and the *Katedral* model with decors such as *Victoria Rose* and *Lyrikk* [Figure 18-4]. Most of these latter decors were standard prints bought



Figure 18-4: Naturalistic floral patterns and modern, abstract decors on the same service model, effectively juxtaposed in an early 1960s sales catalogue. Parts from the service model number 900, *Katedral* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decors: Top left: *Stella*. Top Right: *Lyrikk*. Bottom left: *Victoria Rose*. Bottom right: *Elin*. (Facsimiles from catalogue in Figgjo archive)

from suppliers abroad. Still, *Edel* was marketed as “light and luscious, a right symbol of good taste.”³⁷

The *Lade* model was also offered with a couple of truly vivacious, colourful abstract pattern decors such as *Bingo* and *Valencia* designed by decor design manager Rolf Frøyland. The latter was a rather elaborate and labour intensive decor combining printed pattern with hand-painted enamel details. It was launched in 1960, and proved quite popular, despite it being more expensive than the other *Lade* models.³⁸

37. Advertisement in *Bonytt*, No. 4, 1960, p 4 (“lett og lekker, et riktig symbol på god smak.”)

38. Notes from the Figgjo company museum (Figgjo archive)

The abstract pattern decors offered on the *Katedral* model, like *Stella*, *Elin* [Figure 18-4 & 18-5] and *Allegro* [Figure 18-5]—all designed by Rolf Frøyland—were not



Figure 18-5: Parts from the service model number 900, *Katedral* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decors: Top left: *Elin*. Design: Rolf Frøyland, 1960. Top right and bottom: *Allegro*. Design: Rolf Frøyland, 1965. (Facsimiles from catalogue and photo from Figgjo archive)

blatantly modern, but rather quite unostentatious and held in greys and black, with the odd detail in gold, creating an image which was both acceptable and elegant. They also agreed well with the design of the model, which was modest and unpretentious, but still quite graceful and delicate. Especially the soup tureen has an agreeable and distinctive shape—although vertically mounted handles on a tureen does not seem like a particularly practical design solution. These services were successful solutions to the eternal challenge the Figgjo designers were faced with: How to indulge their own

preferences for modern design without alienating the average consumer.³⁹ The temperate but sinuous design, the white colour combined with the moderate gray and black abstract decors made these products resemble many of the more popular modern porcelain services of the day. One might say that these earthenware product seemed to venture a class journey. Even the model name itself, *Katedral* (*Cathedral*), conveyed a strong symbolic meaning alluding to solemnity, decorum and elegance. Services like *Katedral Elin* and *Katedral Allegro* managed to compose an image of available distinction and class by combining temperance in the use of modern design with temperance in the use of familiar status symbol and temperance in prices. No wonder they proved to be highly popular.

As opposed to the *Lade* and *Katedral* models, the last of the three new series, *Nordkapp*, was predominantly not given naturalistic/figurative floral decors—with two exceptions confirming the rule: one decor called *Valle* alluding to the Norwegian rose painting tradition [Figure 18-6], and one decor called *Smørblomst* (*Buttercup*) designed



Figure 18–6: Parts from the service model number 1000, *Nordkapp* with decor *Valle* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. (Facsimile from catalogue in Figgjo archive)

by Rolf Frøyland.⁴⁰ The great irony of this exception, though, is that the *Nordkapp Smørblomst* became the only Figgjo product ever to appear in *Bonytt* throughout the entire decade, as it was selected as part of a series of “inspirational”/“exemplary” table settings in a 1967 presentation.⁴¹ [Figure 18-7] Why *Bonytt*, the official organ for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—LNB) and generally eager promoters of modernist design, chose the only *Nordkapp* version

39. Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006

40. An additional “quasi-exception” may be found in a decor called *Brazil* which featured a figurative depiction of some leaves—but this was not naturalistic.

41. Sonja Schartum, “De unge setter bo IV” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 27



Figure 18–7: One of a dozen “exemplary” table settings as presented in *Bonytt* in 1967, featuring Figgjo’s service model number 1000, *Nordkapp* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. Decor: *Smørblomst*. Design: Rolf Frøyland. (Facsimile from *Bonytt*, Vol. 27, 1967)

with a naturalistic floral decor over all the other *Nordkapp* versions (or other Figgjo models, for that matter) much more in line with the modernist aesthetic idiom, seems surprising.

But the most probable explanation is actually quite simple, and has to do with the transformation *Bonytt* was undergoing at this time—as discussed in the previous chapter. The presentation in question was the work of Sonja Schartum, a young interior architect belonging to the new generation of writers more or less taking over *Bonytt* towards the end of the 1960s who did not have the same level of dedication to the modernist idioms and lacked the firm rooting in the applied art movement so prominent in their predecessors. It also illustrates how the magazine’s focus was about to turn more and more from product design to interior decoration. The dogmatic moralism was being chucked out in favour of eclectic inspiration, where romantic floral ornaments could easily and peacefully co-exist with stern, undecorated products. This latter point is nicely illustrated by the fact that on the picture [Figure 18-7], the bowl in which the flower arrangement is placed belongs to Arabia’s *Kilta* range designed by Kaj Franck—a bonafide *exemplar* of canonized modernist design.

Despite its appearance in *Bonytt* and its commercial success, the *Smørblomst* decor was not very representative of Figgjo’s product range and identity in the 1960s in general, nor of the *Nordkapp* model in particular. In this respect, widespread and popular *Nordkapp* versions like the abstract pattern decors *Ruth* and *Mecca* designed by Rolf Frøyland and the highly conventionalized decors *Astrid* and *Pernille* designed by Turid Gramstad Oliver and *Cadiz* designed by Rolf Frøyland provide a much more appropriate account. [Figure 18-8] Using earthen colours such as browns and rusty reds and names



Figure 18–8: Parts from the service model number 1000, *Nordkapp* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. Decors: Top left: *Mecca*. Top right: *Cadiz*. Bottom: *Ruth*. Design: Rolf Frøyland. (Facsimiles from catalogues and photo from Figgjo archive)

like *Mecca* and *Cadiz* for their decors clearly demonstrates a sensitivity towards emerging trends in the society at large, such as the concern with “naturalness” characterizing the environmentalist movement and the increasing interest in exotic places and cultures following from rapid advances in private economy, leisure time and international communications.

The *Nordkapp* version with the blue diamond-shaped pattern of the *Ruth* decor designed by Rolf Frøyland is a good example of a success achieved through the policy of defining a common ground: The cleanliness of the model’s shapes and white glazing is neatly maintained without appearing “naked”. The decor adds colour and character to the product without overacting. It seems that this balance between “correct” modernist features and reassuring “cosy” features is what made it both appealing to the general

public and at the same time acceptable to the “educated circles” and professionals. And to Frøyland and the Figgjo designers, this was the true mark of success.⁴² *The Consumer Report (Forbrukerrapporten)*, published by the Consumers’ Council (Forbrukerrådet), emphasized precisely these properties—along with utilitarian qualities—when Figgjo *Nordkapp Ruth* was chosen to exemplify and illustrate what constituted a good service: “The tall coffee cup conserves the heat well. The handle is good and the decor moderate—a service which is not ‘impertinent’.”⁴³

It is interesting that the report in addition to the harmonious decor is so positive in its review of the shape of the cup. Not only was it relatively tall, but making a cup with such steep sides seems to have been somewhat unusual at the time. This design also gives the cup a rather strong, sturdy expression as opposed to the more delicate shapes of earlier Figgjo cups and rival products. There can be no doubt that the consumers liked these features and thought of them as good design, because the *Nordkapp* model became the most important and successful product for the private household market throughout the 1960s and well into the 1970s.

Having discussed the manifestations of Figgjo’s design strategy for the 1960s, i.e. how their new basis for a more rational product differentiation came about through the design of three service models which were then offered in a broad spectre of very different decors, it seems befitting to round up this section with a comment on this strategy/practice—which during the 1960 became quite widespread in the business. In a 1967 *Bonytt* interview, former design manager at Porsgrund, Tias Eckhoff, made some reflections on the relationship between model design and decor design: “Most of the decor we see on services muddles the form and by and large it also destroys the food.”⁴⁴ However, he stressed that he was “absolutely not” opposed to decor in principle:

If form and decor are in harmony, and the decor in addition enriches the service, it is appropriate. But we often see examples to the contrary. Vigorous decors spoil a light and gracious form; a distinct and sturdy form is diminished by thin and flimsy decors... The decor must of course never be assessed isolated.⁴⁵

It should be clear, then, that Eckhoff—and I find it plausible that his view here is quite representative of the design community at large—did not approve much of the strategy employed by Figgjo (and many other manufacturers); to offer decors of such immensely different natures on one and the same model. Nevertheless, he did acknowledge the value of and need for using multiple decor offering as differentiation strategy—especially as a means to catering to the emotional and symbolic uses of products:

42. Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006

43. N.N, “Kopper og kar” in *Forbrukerrapporten*, 1962, p 23 (“Den høye kaffekoppen holder godt på varmen. Hanken er god og dekoren forsiktig—et servise som ikke er ‘påtrengende’.”) A couple of other Figgjo products, such as the *Morgedal Sissel* service and the *Vulcanus* oven-to-table range, were also held up as models in this context.

44. Tias Eckhoff interviewed in Ragnhild Bjelke, “Vurder ikke dekoren isolert” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 212 (“Det meste av den dekor vi ser på servis forkludrer formen og stort sett ødelegger den også maten.”)

45. *Ibid.* (“absolutt ikke. Dersom form og dekor er samstemt, og dekoren dessuten beriker serviset, er den på sin plass. Men vi ser ofte eksempler på det motsatte. Kraftig dekor spolerer en lett og grasiøs form; en lødig og kraftig form blir svekket av tynne og pistrete dekorer... Dekoren må naturligvis aldri vurderes isolert.”)

The decor contributes to setting a tone. It can be rigid and formal or soft and vivacious. Everyone must choose the tone suited to his temper and way of life... The decor plays an important part. For most people, it has a greater symbolic than aesthetic value... The symbolism of decor is of course not universal, it is faddish and often change content. The symbolic value of decor is an interesting psychological phenomenon.⁴⁶

The greatest importance of these comments is that they reveal an ideological accept for and professional interest in how different types of decor can be used to target different market segments, inscribe different symbolic meanings and provoke different emotional responses. As tolerant and including this may seem, it did not by any means imply a *laissez-faire* attitude towards the ethics of design aesthetics or a deideologizing of design. While admitting a curiosity towards the exploration of various solutions to the same problem—and thereby in a sense challenging the dogma of functionalism—Eckhoff still made a crystal clear demarkation against “the usual suspects” of modernist design; in this case naturalistic floral decors. When asked how decor could destroy food, the designer replied: “What do You think of stew on red roses?”⁴⁷

18.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed Figgjo’s basic strategies for readjusting to the new economic world order of international free trade in the 1960s. To the company management, rationalisation of the production became the all-important issue in this work, as Norway was already becoming a high-cost country, and flexible, efficient high-quality production was seen as the weapon of choice in the impending increased competition with bigger, international actors and their cut-price goods. As we have seen, design played a crucial role in this reconfiguration of the enterprise.

The first part of this chapter analysed how Figgjo redirected their market, design and product strategies through curtailment and cultivation. Offering “something for everyone” was no longer a viable approach, and the company employed some quite drastic measures in this transformation. By curtailing the inflated product portfolio and cultivating a few flexible design concepts, a considerable degree of rationalisation could be achieved without relapsing to a situation reminiscent of Henry Ford’s legendary approach to colour scheme of the *Model T*.

The second part of this chapter studied how this new design strategy was implemented. In an industry where visual product differentiation is of such crucial importance, it was absolutely essential that the rationalisation left ample room for

46. *Ibid.* (“Dekoren er med og angir en tone. Den kan være stiv og formell eller myk og livlig. Enhver må velge den tone som passer hans temperament og livsform... Dekoren spiller en viktig rolle. For de fleste har den en større symbolsk enn estetisk verdi... Dekorens symbolikk er naturligvis ikke almengyldig, den er motebetont og skifter ofte innhold. Dekorens symbolverdi er et interessant psykologisk fenomen.”)

47. *Ibid.* (“Hva synes De om lapskaus på røde roser?”) His statements’ relevance to Figgjo is enhanced by the fact that Eckhoff enjoyed great respect and admiration among Figgjo’s designers: Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006

variations. The challenge, then was to develop a new basis for a more rational product differentiation. Figgjo sought to resolve this intrinsic paradox by devising a design programme focusing on flexible forms. A few, basic service models were designed in such a way that they would lend themselves to vast range of decors, allowing these products to be inscribed with a great many and highly dissimilar intended identities.

The strategical reorientations outlined here tell of a demanding but relatively successful take on the major challenges Norwegian manufactured goods industry encountered in the age of international free trade. Industrial design played a crucial role in this process, but, as we have seen, its role was partly redefined: In the context of the industry, good design was not so much creating the “perfect”, singular artefact, but rather constructing flexible concepts and systems that combined to form an appropriate product portfolio. As we shall see later, this tendency of thinking about design more in strategic and systematic terms was one of the major reasons why Figgjo’s design practice moved away from the applied art community’s focus after the short romance between the two in the late 1950s discussed earlier.

The next chapter will analyse one of the more distinct categories of these new Figgjo product, one that is characterised by exuberant, festive forms, and that is particularly interesting because it represents a fascinating attempt at domesticating the modernist design of its models by the use of a decor scheme that was anything but rationalistic.

19 Festive forms:

Decor design and emotive élan

19.1 Introduction

As we have seen in various connections throughout this study, the issue of decor remained a pebble in the shoe of modern design. As it was difficult to discuss with a basis in the modern movement's default logic of the primacy of utilitarian function, but at the same time a near and dear phenomenon both to designers and public, the question of decor seemed doomed to be solved and evaluated *ad hoc* in design practice. What seems clear, though, is that no matter what the design elite might think of decor and its ideological entanglements, the remarkable communicative efficiency and versatility of decor as a design feature/practice made it a favoured property for the public as well as for manufacturers.

This latter point seems to have been particularly poignant in the case of tableware, and as the former chapter demonstrated, Figgjo placed much trust and confidence in the power of decor in their design practice in the 1960s. But what kind of decor was best suited for this strategy? Could the deployment of certain kinds of decor be a way of making modern design more acceptable to common consumers imagined by the design elite and manufacturers to have a predilection for conspicuous aesthetics? This chapter will analyse how in one important segment of their product portfolio Figgjo made use of some highly characteristic decors with exuberant, festive forms as a means to domesticate the rather stark modernism of their new service models, embedding them in emotive allusions.

The products under scrutiny below featured decor designs (all developed for the silk screen technique) that represented a distinctively new turn for Figgjo. The first part of this chapter will analyse one of two groups of products that can be identified within this broader category. What these first have in common is a decor scheme based on a particular kind of folkloristic motifs. Based on simple line drawings of expressive and contextualised personae, these decor designs can be seen as overt inscriptions of merryness, joy and familiarity.

The second part of this chapter will discuss the other subcategory, a group of decors with less immediate narrative strategies but with the same exuberance in form. These are characterised by more rustic and psychedelic patterns, resonating with broader cultural trends picking up momentum in the course of the 1960s. What is interesting about these latter design developments is that their influences to a very small degree were filtered through or mediated by the Norwegian design community, but seems to have made their way to Figgjo from society at large.

19.2 Domesticating modern models I: Folklorica

Serving food on “red roses” was despicable to the design elite, while serving food on the subtle abstract pattern- and relief decors they advocated seemed to have been considered too boring, unfamiliar or frigid to the majority of consumers. Was there a third way, then? As we have seen, designers like Figgjo’s Ragnar Grimsrud only rather reluctantly gave the consumers “red roses”—they never gave up their preferences for modernist design aesthetics. However, as actors in a commercial enterprise and a market economy, their output had to be not only acceptable, but even attractive and desirable to a broad range of consumers. Hence, the challenge was to produce an acceptable and attractive face of modernism.

In the 1950s, Figgjo had succeeded quite well in this, especially with the *Morgedal Sissel* service. As argued above, the coloured clay mass decors played an essential role in making this modern design of the *Morgedal* model acceptable and attractive to the broader public. If it had been important to offer an acceptable and attractive face of modernism in the 1950s, it became even more important that this face had a broad appeal in the 1960s now that Figgjo had discontinued the nostalgic model designs such as *Jarlsberg* and were thus left without a safety net capable of catching those customers not captured by the modern models. In the 1960s, then, Figgjo developed a new strategy of how to *domesticate* the modern design of their models by means of decor. Like the coloured clay mass decors of the 1950s, this type of decor represents “the third way” (neither “red roses” nor elitist modernism), but made use of a completely different formal language—probably best described as folkloristic.

These new series of decors widely applied to Figgjo’s new, modern service models are inseparably linked to the name of Turid Gramstad Oliver. After studying ceramics at the Bergen School of Arts and Crafts (Bergen kunsthåndverksskole—BKHS) and the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS), Gramstad Oliver got a position as decor designer at Figgjo in 1960, only 22 years old.¹ It might seem strange that Figgjo never made use of her training as a ceramist in terms of having her design models in addition to or in stead of decors. The reason for this is of course partly to be found in the particular needs of the company, but social conventions and industry traditions should not be ruled out as partial explanations. The British design historian Cheryl Buckley has argued that the quite consistent sexual division of labour between model design (male) and decor design (female) in pre-WWII British pottery industry was largely caused by negotiations on the social conventions regarding what kind of work was deemed “proper” for women and what was considered to constitute women’s distinctive “inherent” artistic abilities.² As mentioned above,

1. Knut Berg, Stephan Tschudi-Madsen, *et al.* (eds.), *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 3 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1986) p 134-137

2. Cheryl Buckley, “The Noblesse of the Banks’: Craft Hierarchies, Gender Divisions, and the Roles of Women Paintresses and Designers in the British Pottery Industry 1890-1939” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1989 p 257-273. Buckley has also discussed more generally design in light of the social construction of gender in: Cheryl Buckley, “Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1986, p 3-14

Figgjo learned a lot from the British pottery industry, and it would not be surprising if this part of the industry tradition also made it across the North Sea. It might be recalled that all the female designers working at Figgjo in the 1940s also worked exclusively with decors.³

The great number of decors Gramstad Oliver designed in the 1960s were all made for the silk screen printing technique. As shown above, Figgjo had gotten its own in-house silk-screen printing office a few years earlier, operational from 1957. Silk screen printing had made the design of own decors much simpler and cheaper. Hence, the versatility and adaptability of the silk screen printing technique made it well-suited for Figgjo's new strategy of a more rational product differentiation.

Gramstad Oliver's decors can by and large be subcategorized in two typologies: narrative tableaux and conventionalized, rustic motifs—both characterized by a striking exuberance in their formal language. These decor designs represented a distinctively new turn for Figgjo, and as such it was only befitting that they were applied to the newest service models. Her first decors were designed for the *Nordkapp* model discussed above, and later projects were designated for newer models like the 1965 *Færder* designed by Ragnar Grimsrud and the 1968 *Feistein* designed by Jørg Løve Nielsen.

One of Turid Gramstad Oliver's first, most characteristic and popular decor designs was launched in 1962 on the *Nordkapp* model and named *Lotte* [Figure 19-1]. By means of simple line drawing printed in a clear blue colour with purple and green details, the young designer created a very expressive decor in the form of a narrative tableau. The most evidently novel aspect of *Lotte* is that it introduced representations of personae, or characters/figures, to Figgjo's spectre of design expressions. Of course, most—perhaps every—kind of design expression or formal language may be said to convey some sort of narrative or at least symbolic intention, but it can hardly be done more explicitly than here: composing a narrative tableau made up of expressive personae staged in a elucidatory context. It is hard to think of a way of telling a story through a physical product that would make for more efficient and accessible communication than by using such familiar and recognizable devices. *Lotte* did not sell very well on the domestic market, but became a great success on several export markets, especially in Canada, Japan and Australia.⁴ Since other Figgjo products also sold well on these markets, the success of *Lotte* can not be attributed solely to the narrativity of the decor, but it nevertheless seems to have been an issue. A manuscript for a marketing campaign issued by Figgjo's Australian distributor entitled "The Story of Lotte" says it all:

"Lazy Lotte" was a beautiful Scandinavian girl who lived on a green mountain in Norway, overlooking a sparkling Ffiord. [sic] Lotte had every grace except one (which is sometimes lacking in many of us) that of industry. Hence her name "Lazy Lotte".

Lotte yearned for romance as she dreamed with the flowers and birds on her green

3. The same was the case at Stavangerflint, where the female designers Kari Nyquist, Inger Waage, Anne Lofthus and Kristin Selmer designed only decors. Not so, however, at Porsgrund where Nora Guldbrandsen (pre-WWII) and Anne Marie Ødegaard (post-WWII) designed both decors and models.

4. Turid Gramstad Oliver in conversation with the author, 03.03.2006

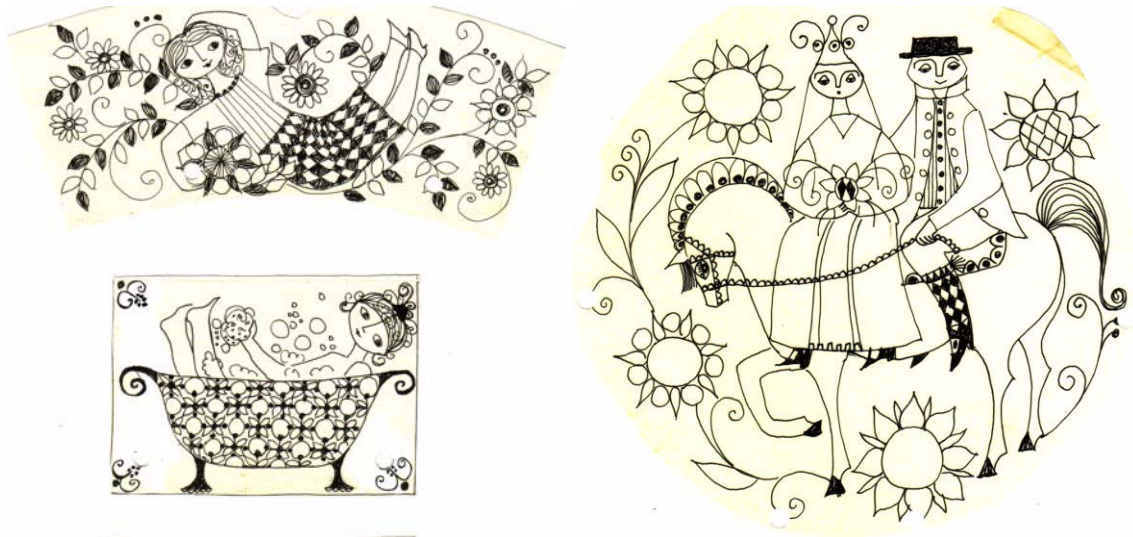


Figure 19-1: Top: From an English brochure: Parts from the service model number 1000, *Nordkapp* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. Decor: *Lotte*. Design: Turid Gramstad Oliver, 1962. Bottom: Some of Gramstad Oliver's sketches for the *Lotte* decor. (Facsimiles of brochure and sketches in Figgjo archive)

mountain, but couldn't really bring herself to undertake a journey that may have brought encounters. By chance, however, it was her good fortune to be found amongst the fields by Samuel. Thus, without exertion, Lotte found her romance.

You can follow the story of Lotte (and Samuel) on the beautiful ceramic oven and

tableware, produced by Figgjo in Norway. You can purchase individual pieces, luncheon/dinner settings, all wonderfully functional and decorative. Lotte's charming life can be followed from piece to piece.⁵

Apart from the curious fact that the narrative tableau decor despite its complete lack of fjords and mountains in its design here is said to convey the exotic Norwegian nature, it is evident that the storytelling function of the *Lotte* decor is exploited at its fullest. The utilitarian functions of the product becomes little more than a side effect to the true virtue of this tableware: that you are offered a story told on a canvas that just happens to be earthenware rather than a movie screen or book paper. The assumption that people really could relate to this way of design communication (with or without the helping hand of "instructions" like the one cited above) is supported by a passage in an early brochure:

Many people have enquired about the "LOTTE" pattern and whether there is a story connected with it. Here is a letter from "LOTTE"'s designer, Mrs. Turi Gramstad-Oliver, to an enquiring customer.

Dear Miss B. I'm sorry to inform you that the Lotte-pattern is not built on a story, like you have been told. It is more or less a product of my imagination. How that line started was that somebody asked me to make something charming with some figures into. Then I started by making this lazy Lotte and that lead me into a world of very strange people. So I have been dreaming along, imagine how nice it would be to live in that sort of world, spending a lazy life between flowers and birds. I hope this have given you some idea how this Lotte pattern was born.

Sincerely, Turi Gramstad-Oliver⁶

What might look like a contradiction here, is merely a question of parlance: Figgjo and Gramstad Oliver do not by any means deny that they intend to convey a story through *Lotte*—they just renounce any liability concerning its grounding in any *true* story.

The remarkable effect, attractiveness and popularity of the *Lotte* decor seemed to be rather autonomous—that is, disconnected from the design of the service model to which it was applied. Nothing supports such an assertion better than the fact that when the *Nordkapp* model in the early 1980s after about 20 years in production was being phased out, the *Lotte* decor was launched on a new model called *Gourmet*—which was not only of a very different design, but even made of a different material (vitreous china) [Figure 19-2].

Whereas *Lotte* was the first and clearly the most popular of Turid Gramstad Oliver's folkloric narrative tableau decors in the 1960s, two other modifications of the theme should be mentioned. The one which resembles *Lotte* the most is *Market*, launched on the *Nordkapp* model in 1966. In fact, Gramstad Oliver herself was not particularly happy about the management's request for a decor so similar to a previous one, and it did not sell as well as *Lotte* either.⁷ The *Market* decor is kept in greens, and the narrative tableau depicts the picturesque, romantic life at a village market, featuring fishmongers,

5. N.N., *The Story of Lotte* [manuscript for a marketing campaign by Figgjo's Australian distributor J.D.Milner Associates] (Figgjo archive)

6. *Figgjo Lotte* (Brochure, undated—Figgjo archive)

7. Turid Gramstad Oliver in conversation with the author, 03.03.2006



Figure 19–2: *New shit, same wrapping?* The much later service model *Gourmet* (vitreous china) Figgjo, 1980-1982. Designer: Kåre B. Fjeldsaa. Decor: Lotte. Design: Turid Gramstad Oliver, 1962. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

fruiterers, florists and other marketers, and customers. This is the tale of a happy-go-lucky, back to nature, relaxing, pleasant village life [Figure 19-3].

Market can thus be interpreted as a comment on or mirror of trends in society at large in the latter part of the 1960s especially the growing scepticism towards modern urban life. Still, *Market* was just another decor, representing just another fashion. Hence, it can be seen both as in line with and at odds with the debate on design for the “real” world discussed earlier, as this campaign for genuineness and naturalness implied both a critique of the modernist notion of urban utopia and perpetual progress but also a strong aversion to design as fashion and consumption catalyst. Herein lies the fundamental discrepancy between design’s ideological potential/responsibility (save the world) and design’s pragmatic potential/responsibility (save the company).

The last of Gramstad Oliver’s three narrative tableau decors, *Arden*, was launched in 1969. As opposed to *Lotte* and *Market*, *Arden* was not applied to the *Nordkapp* model, but to a newer and less common model called *Færder* (series number 2100) designed by Ragnar Grimsrud and introduced in 1965. After the blues of *Lotte* and the greens of *Market*, Gramstad Oliver’s line drawing decor for *Arden* were printed in a pink/red colour. The motif this time was more like some kind of a fairy-tale woodland, presenting her merry personae in the midst of a magic forest [Figure 19-4]. The design was inspired by the Shakespeare play *As You Like It*, which Gramstad Oliver had seen at Rogaland



Figure 19–3: Left: Parts from the service model number 1000, *Nordkapp* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. Decor: *Market*. Design: Turid Gramstad Oliver, 1966. Right: Two of Gramstad Oliver’s sketches for the *Market* decor. (Facsimiles of brochure and sketches in Figgjo archive)

Teater in Stavanger.⁸ The title of the play was even used as working title for the project during its development.⁹ *As You Like It* is about two women who are banished from Court and seek sanctuary in the magical Forest of Arden.¹⁰ This Shakespeare comedy is described as a celebration of female independence, the liberating power of love and the redeeming spirit of nature. Though having been written in the 17th century, this story clearly had great appeal in the political, social and cultural environment of the late 1960s. Based on the popularity of *Lotte* and *Market*, the designers expressed strong faith in *Arden*.¹¹ I think it is safe to assume that they expected *Arden* to do the same to *Færder* as *Lotte* and *Market* had done to *Nordkapp*. But although Gramstad Oliver considered *Arden* to be her very best design work, it did not come close to *Lotte* in terms of popularity and commercial success.¹²

One difference, though—*Arden* was made using underglaze technique, whereas *Lotte* and *Market* had been overglaze decors to begin with (but were later made using underglaze technique).¹³ Here, it is interesting to note that whereas—as we have seen—

8. *Ibid.*

9. Minutes from design meeting (designmøte) 03.02.1969 (Figgjo archive)

10. William Shakespeare, “As You Like It” in William Shakespeare, *The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare* (London: Chansellor Press, 1993) p 214-238

11. Minutes from design meeting (designmøte) 09.04.1969 (Figgjo archive)

12. Turid Gramstad Oliver in conversation with the author, 03.03.2006



Figure 19–4: Parts from the service model number 2100, *Færder* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1965. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decor: *Arden*. Design: Turid Gramstad Oliver, 1969. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

Figgjo in advertisements and brochures (for other products) used *durability* as the argument why underglaze was better than overglaze decors, internal discussions on what technique to use in the case of *Arden* reveals a completely different reasoning: “Underglaze is to be preferred as this method gives the best appearance.”¹⁴

The expressive decor created by Turid Gramstad Oliver’s simple line drawings combining representations of characters/figures and flora elements was certainly a new direction for Figgjo’s design strategy. But the formal language the young designer used can hardly be said to have been her own, genuine invention. The most striking reference and most evident source of inspiration is clearly the Danish ceramist and decor designer Bjørn Wiinblad. His decors for the Danish earthenware factory Nymølle from the 1950s and also for the German Rosenthal works became both highly popular and reputable, and exerted widespread influence on decor designers all over Scandinavia and beyond.¹⁵ In Norway, there are several such examples of similar formal language used in decors for

13. Notes from the Figgjo company museum (Figgjo archive)

14. Minutes from design meeting (designmøte) 09.04.1969 (Figgjo archive) (“Underglasur foretrekkes da denne metoden gir det beste utseende.”)

15. To name but one Nordic example that is very similar to *Lotte*: The Finnish Arabia factory launched an all-black line drawing decor called *Emilia* designed by Raija Uosikkinen in 1957 applied to the *Kilta* model designed by Kaj Franck in 1953

ceramic products. At Porsgrund Porselænsfabrik, for instance, both Anne Marie Ødegaard, Konrad Galaaen and Arne Lindaas composed decors during the 1950s that greatly resembled those of Wiinblad [Figure 19-5].¹⁶



Figure 19-5: Left: Decor sketch by Anne Marie Ødegaard for Porsgrund, 1957. Right: Hotel service *Form* (feldspar porcelain) Porsgrund, 1952. Designers: Tias Eckhoff and Andreas Gauslaa. Custom made decor for Hotel Vic designed by Konrad Galaaen, 1957. (Facsimiles from A. Bøe, *Porsgrund's Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år, 1885-1965* (Porsgrund & Oslo: PP & J. Grundt Tanums forlag, 1967))

Furthermore, another Norwegian ceramist, Kari Nyquist, produced decors such as *Blå serie* and *Ferie* as designer for Stavangerflint in the mid-1950s. The formal language of these made the artist and critic Thomas Breivik in an exhibition review openly accuse her of plagiarizing Wiinblad. Her fellow ceramist Kåre Mjøs begged to differ and retorted: “I know that he [Wiinblad] is no idol to Kari Nyquist” but admitted that “[t]hey are probably closely related”.¹⁷ And Mjøs was Gramstad Oliver’s teacher when she studied ceramics at the Bergen School of Arts and Crafts (Bergen kunsthåndverksskole—BKHS). Whereas Wiinblad was a great inspiration for Gramstad Oliver, although she at the time hesitated to admit it, Kari Nyquist had an even more immediate influence. Between her studies in Bergen and Oslo, Gramstad Oliver worked closely with Nyquist for a year at Stavangerflint—she even boarded at the Nyquist home.¹⁸ Another colleague of Gramstad Oliver and Nyquist at Stavangerflint, Inger Waage, also made use of a similar formal language in some decors from around 1960—although these were applied to artware and not to mass produced objects. There is also a more direct connection between Wiinblad and Nyquist, Waage and Gramstad Oliver: For a period around 1960, the Danish earthenware factory Nymølle hired production

16. Alf Bøe, *Porsgrund's Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år* (Porsgrund/Oslo: Porsgrund's Porselænsfabrik/Tanum, 1967) p 246-252. I find it curious that Bøe does not mention Wiinblad in his discussion on the Porsgrund decors.

17. Kåre Mjøs, “Utstillingen “Keramikk” i Permanenten” in *Morgenavisen*, 14.10.1955 (“jeg vet at han ikke er forbilde for Kari Nyquist... De er nok nær beslektet”)

18. Turid Gramstad Oliver in conversation with the author, 03.03.2006

capacity at Stavangerflint for the manufacture of plaques and vases with decors designed by Wiinblad.¹⁹ I have no interest in turning this into a debate on who inspired/plagiarized who, but it is instructive to note that the formal language of Gramstad Oliver's popular decors for Figgjo was not unparalleled.²⁰ Still, I would argue that the elaborate narratives and vigorous colours make her versions highly distinctive.

As for Wiinblad's own design philosophy, he surely never conformed to any modernist dogma. In a 1987 *Bonytt* interview, he said that "What's most important to me—today as back when I started—is that what I make shall bring about joy."²¹ It should be recalled here, then, that it was precisely Bjørn Wiinblad's exuberant ceramics that made *Bonytt* editor Arne Remlov assert that "even amusement is a function in life" when he in the mid-1960s struggled with the touchy subject of artefacts' emotional functions.²² As discussed above, Remlov's concern was that designers had to improve their inscription of emotional functions in modern products in order to prevent consumers from having to resort to the dreaded aesthetics of kitsch, nostalgia and traditionalesque to feed their need to experience the emotional aspects of artefacts. Given the *Bonytt* editor's flair for Wiinblad, one might say that Figgjo truly took him at his word. By inscribing products such as *Lotte*, *Market* and *Arden* with these highly emotive narratives, Figgjo managed to create socio-technical scripts that consumers willingly subscribed to. It thus becomes a quite patent line of reasoning to argue that to Figgjo, Gramstad Oliver's exuberant, folkloristic decors represented an attempt at domesticating the modernism of their product design—and a rather successful one at that.

19.3 Domesticating modern models II: Rusticana & Psychedelia

The *Nordkapp* model discussed above definitely made up the bulk of Figgjo's production volume and sales on the private household market in the 1960. Offered with decors so vastly different in character as e.g. *Smørblomst*, *Ruth* and *Lotte*, it displayed a remarkable versatility befitting of such an allround product. Despite the success of the *Nordkapp*

19. Torbjørn Larsen interviewed by Jan Gjerde, 11.01.2007. Larsen was a laboratory technician at Stavangerflint at the time, working on glazing development. Information forwarded by Gjerde to the author.

20. In a more popular account it has even been asserted that "His [Wiinblad's] curious hybrid style, which mixes the age-old with the modern, came to epitomize the decorative revival that occurred in Scandinavian design during the 1960s.": Charlotte and Peter Fiell, *Scandinavian Design* (Köln: Taschen, 2002) p 660. In a sardonic 1954 article in *Dansk kunsthåndværk* on the intrinsically honouring but commercially troublesome phenomenon of plagiarism, Wiinblad's decors were used as examples: "We would have nothing against a tattoo-loving pirate bringing home a bowl decorated by Bjørn Wiinblad if the objective was to engrave the pattern on his chest, but when it is to put the same bowls in own production, it is plunder." I must emphasize, though, that the text refers to an Italian manufacturer and a distributor in the USA, and makes no mention of any Norwegian designs or products: B.S., "Plagiat-piraterne på verdenshavene" in *Dansk kunsthåndværk*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1954, p 125 ("Vi skulle ikke sige noget til, at en tatoveringsglad pirat hjemførte en skål dekoreret af Bjørn Wiinblad, hvis det var for at indgrave mønsteret på brystet, men når det er for at sætte de samme skåle i egen produktion, så er det rov.")

21. Bjørn Wiinblad interviewed in Tone Solheim, "Form-design-funksjon: Dekorative bruksting" in *Bonytt*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 1987, p 37

22. Arne Remlov, "Langt fra stagnasjon" in *Bonytt* Vol. 25, 1965, p 157 ("moro også er en funksjon i livet")

model and, one might argue, somewhat at odds with the strategy coined around 1960; a reduced model portfolio as the basis for a more rational product differentiation, Figgjo developed two new service models later in the 1960s. The first has already been mentioned as the host of the *Arden* decor: A model called *Færder* (series number 2100) designed by Ragnar Grimsrud and introduced in 1965. The model is distinguished by squarish plates and saucers, a lower and wider cup, and an unconventional solution to the handles on vessels like the soup tureen and the gravy boat. That Grimsrud here went for a less plain design than he had with the *Nordkapp* model indicates that *Færder* was not meant as a new “bread and butter” model, but more as a specialized range aiming for a growing “post-necessity” market: number two-services for occasions like tea parties etc.

The difference in design of these two models is also nicely illustrated by the disparate symbolic meaning conveyed by their model names. The allusions spurred by a name like *Nordkapp* (North Cape) can be said to conform well to the strong, sturdy design of this basic, allround model. Not quite so in the case of *Færder*. This model was named after a group of islands in the Oslo fjord largely considered one of the finest and most exclusive excursion spots and holiday places in the country. The royal family has their summer houses in the vicinity, and the islands also gave name to a famous regatta organized by the Royal Norwegian Yacht Club (Kongelig Norsk Seilforening). In short, the name *Færder* is saturated with allusions to posh people, fancy lives and chic leisure. It should be clear then, that in the design of their *Færder* model Figgjo tried to inscribe a socio-technical script very different to that of the *Nordkapp* model in order to aim at a more specialised market segment.

The first decor made for the *Færder* model was the 1965 *Clupea* designed by Turid Gramstad Oliver [Figure 19-6]. Unlike the later *Arden* decor for the same model discussed above, *Clupea* became widely popular.²³ *Clupea* represents the other trajectory in Gramstad Oliver’s decor designs, the sub-category described above as conventionalized, rustic motifs. The motif of the *Clupea* decor is rows of conventionalized fish lined up after each other horizontally and vertically, and the chosen colours are blue, green and yellow. On the vertical sides of the vessels, the pattern becomes very massive, reinforcing the rustic feel created by the choice of motif and formal language.

In 1968, Figgjo introduced a service model that, unlike *Færder*, perhaps could be considered a development of the design concept represented by *Nordkapp*. The new model was called *Feistein* (series number 2300) and was designed by Jørg Løve Nielsen. Løve Nielsen was Figgjo’s chief modeller and had thus collaborated closely in the development of all earlier models and been in charge of the design of the *Nordkapp* model, but *Feistein* was the first model series which design was officially attributed to him. Like his colleague Rolf Frøyland, but opposed to Ragnar Grimsrud, Turid Gramstad Oliver—and the designers at the Stavanger department of the now merged company; Kåre B. Fjeldsaa, Thorbjørn Feyling, Inger Waage and Kristin Selmer—Løve Nielsen did not have much formal training in design or craft.²⁴ He had learned the trade from within, starting out as an apprentice in the decor department in 1948. He soon transferred

23. Turid Gramstad Oliver in conversation with the author, 03.03.2006



Figure 19–6: Parts from the service model number 2100, *Færder* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1965. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. Decor: *Clupea*. Design: Turid Gramstad Oliver, 1965. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

to the plaster workshop where he trained as a modeller under Grimsrud’s guidance, and slowly rose in the scale. With the 1960 *Nordkapp* model, Løve Nielsen was trusted with the responsibility of fully-fledged design projects, as Grimsrud did less detail design work and devoted himself more to administrative and organisational tasks.²⁵

Industrial design is, at least as I see it, always teamwork of some sort, and the process is notoriously obscured or black-boxed after the fact.²⁶ It is thus of minor importance to labour the question of who did what on the individual projects.²⁷ Nevertheless, the fact that the design of the *Feistein* model was officially attributed to Løve Nielsen is

24. Løve Nielsen and Frøyland had both briefly attended a private art school in Stavanger to learn basic drawing and sketching: Jørg Løve Nielsen in conversation with the author, 01.03.2006 and Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006. Frøyland, however, had in 1958—after 13 years at Figgjo—been sent to Stoke-on-Trent for a year for further education at the Stoke-on-Trent College of Art

25. Jørg Løve Nielsen in conversation with the author, 01.03.2006

26. The methodological challenge posed to design history by the fact that designers and manufacturers have been notoriously unconcerned with documentation and archiving of the design process is instructively discussed in: Kenneth Agnew, “The Spitfire: Legend or History? An Argument for a New Research Culture in Design” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993, p 121-123

27. Many of the highly problematic aspects of attribution to individuals and the notion of authorship in industrial design is duly discussed in: John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989) p 45-56

interesting because it can be seen as an indication that Grimsrud now considered his apprentice and colleague a fully qualified industrial designer. This, in turn, must be seen in connection with the fact that the design manager now was 66 years old and most probably had begun to think about who were to fill his shoes. And surely enough, when Grimsrud stepped down in 1973, the design management of Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S was confided to Jørg Løve Nielsen together with Kåre B. Fjeldsaa.²⁸

As already noted, the *Feistein* model had more in common with *Nordkapp* than with *Færder*, in the sense that it too was a basic all-round model. This impression is enhanced by the fact that some services (decors) were offered with cups from both the *Nordkapp* series and the *Feistein* series, allowing customers to mix and match according to their needs and desires. But although the programme for the design of these two model series was very similar, the designs of the cups were actually quite different. Whereas the *Nordkapp* cups were convex both in body and handle, the *Feistein* cups were concave both in body and handle. This resulted in a very harmonious bell-shaped body, and it gave the handle an advantageous functional property: the wide concave curve made for a comfortable grip while keeping the fingers at a distance from the hot surface of the cup body. A mundane, but very neat design feature.

Another distinct feature of the *Feistein* model with respect to earlier models is that the basic forms of the vessels—soup tureen, pot, pan, etc.—were severely simplified and more or less reduced to straight cylindrical verticals and plain horizontal shapes. The sweeping, curving and everting shapes were now abandoned in favour of more serene, rigid and clear-cut ones. It is not unlikely that Løve Nielsen came to these solutions, far from the conventions of “Scandinavian Design” as they were, based on experiences made with Figgjo’s new priority over the preceding years, the hotel china series. Another explanation is that both the model designers and the decor designers found it more and more important that the models were given shapes and surfaces which lend themselves well to decoration.²⁹

One of the first decors made for the *Feistein* model was the 1968 *Barcarole* designed by Turid Gramstad Oliver [Figure 19-7]. Of her decors in the category of conventionalized, rustic motifs, this is one of the more interesting ones. *Barcarole* is composed of highly conventionalized floral elements put together in a manner where inner symmetry of the pattern and its adherence to the forms and surfaces of the service have been given far more attention than what actual flowers look like and how they relate to each other in reality. It seems to represent some sort of stylized and somewhat psychedelic or kaleidoscopic meadow. The colours are red, orange and mauve.

Another of Gramstad Oliver’s decor designs for the *Feistein* model was *Granada*, also from 1968 [Figure 19-8]. Here, a similar effect of psychedelic or kaleidoscopic optics is generated, but with different means. The colours are of a different scale; blue, green and yellow, and the pattern is not only conventionalized, but almost completely abstract. Whereas the motifs of *Clupea* and *Barcarole* remained rooted in the tradition of

28. Fjeldsaa had been design manager at Stavangerflint from 1958 until the merger in 1968 when he was made chief designer for the Stavanger plant.

29. Turid Gramstad Oliver in conversation with the author, 03.03.2006



Figure 19–7: Parts from the service model number 2300, *Feistein* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1968. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. Decor: *Barcarole*. Design: Turid Gramstad Oliver, 1968. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

figurative representation, albeit highly conventionalised and denaturalized, *Granada* severed these ties. Launched in 1968, its allusions to *op-art* psychedelia must be said to have been very much in touch with general cultural trends at the time. But, as we shall see, this is no guarantee for commercial success.

These two latter services, *Feistein Barcarole* and *Granada*, must be said to have represented a new and daring endeavour for Figgjo. Developing a new service model series is of course always a costly affair. Going for these two very distinctive, unconventional and rather intense decors as the flagships of the new model, then, was a bold move. Even a bit too daring, as it turned out. An internal report from the 1969 Hannover industries fair stated that “Regarding ‘Barcarole’ and ‘Granada’, the interest at the fair was very low.”³⁰ Already in October 1969, the minutes from a product portfolio development meeting confirmed this grim picture and decided to cut the losses: “‘Barcarole’ [and] ‘Granada’... have not become what we expected, and export discontinues ‘Granada’.”³¹ It is hard to say why these new services did not become as

30. H. Helgø, “P.M. Vedrørende Hannover-messen 1969” in Minutes from sales/design meeting (salg/designmøte) 21.05.1969 (Figgjo archive) (“Når det gjelder ‘Barcarole’ og ‘Granada’ var interessen på messen svært liten.”)

31. Minutes from product portfolio development (kolleksjonsutvikling) 09.10.1969 (Figgjo archive) (“‘Barcarole’ [og] ‘Granada’... er ikke blitt det vi forventet, og eksport melder ut ‘Granada’.”)



Figure 19–8: Parts from the service model number 2300, *Feistein* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1968. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. Decor: *Granada*. Design: Turid Gramstad Oliver, 1968. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

big commercial successes as some of the earlier ones. But one hypothesis might be that they were not considered as exotic or as expressive as e.g. *Lotte* and *Market*.

It makes sense, then, that the last service decor of the 1960s by Turid Gramstad Oliver hovers somewhere between the two categories discussed this far. *Daisy* was launched in 1969 on the old *Nordkapp* model, but with optional cups from the new *Feistein* model. As the name would suggest, *Daisy* depicts daisy flowers with white petals and orange calyx against a blue background [Figure 19-9]. The flower itself is quite figurative in its design, but in the decor it is detached from its stem and other natural surroundings, so that the decor takes on a rather iconic expression. It is cheerful like *Lotte*, but lacks its overt narrative, and simple like *Granada*, but without its psychedelic intensity. The report from the Hannover industries fair which brought such sad news regarding *Barcarole* and *Granada* was far more optimistic when it came to *Daisy*: “There has been great interest in the ‘Daisy’ service, and it has sold well.”³² Whereas the market, i.e. the wholesalers, thus seemed to look upon *Granada* and *Daisy* with fundamentally different eyes, the design elites did not necessarily do so. It would not be the first time the two communities had a difference of opinion. This is neatly

32. Helgø, *op.cit.* (“Servivet ‘Daisy’ har det vært stor interesse for, og det er solgt bra inn.”)



Figure 19-9: Left: Parts from the service model number 1000, *Nordkapp* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1960 and parts (cups) from the service model number 2300, *Feistein* (earthenware) Figgjo, 1968. Designer: Jørg Løve Nielsen. Decor: *Daisy*. Design: Turid Gramstad Oliver, 1969. Right: An Australian advertisement for *Daisy*. The copy reads: “Daisy designs by Figgjo to brighten up your day ... and your kitchen!” (Facsimiles of brochure and advertisement in Figgjo archive)

illustrated by the fact that both *Granada* and *Daisy*—a commercial failure and a commercial success from the same manufacturer—both received a Dutch design award in Utrecht in 1969.³³

The report from the Hannover industries fair concluded that there was still great interest in the older Figgjo services, and explained that “[i]t is the decors that are popular, but also the design.”³⁴ It should thus be clear that if the vast array of decors Figgjo offered on their relatively few service models in 1960s has been given much attention here, it has been rightfully so. In the 1960s Figgjo operated in a market where international competition was so hard that a curtailed and rational production was essential to survive—but so was catering to the consumers’ diverse preferences and seemingly unending desire for emotional functionality. Figgjo’s solution, then, was to tone down the product design, making the modern designs of their service models more harmless or “tame” by letting the more versatile and expressive decor design to the fore.

Many of the services discussed here became successful export products for Figgjo. As mentioned above, this was especially true in the case of *Lotte*, which became highly popular in Canada and Australia. That Figgjo’s popularity was so vast in these two countries in the latter half of the 1960s is very interesting when viewed against the fact that the same two countries were subject to promotion campaigns from the official Norwegian design community: at the world exhibition *EXPO 67* in Montreal and the

33. “Våre 9 designere” in *Informasjon* Nr.1, 1970 [Brochure] (Figgjo archive). Contrary to what the brochure may imply, this was no official design award—it was a prize received at an annual Utrecht ceramics fair: Turid Gramstad Oliver in conversation with the author, 03.03.2006

34. Helgø, *op.cit.* (“Det er dekorene som er i skuddet, men også formen.”)

exhibition *Design in Scandinavia* which toured Australia in 1968. The fascinating thing here is that Figgjo's success in Canada and Australia had nothing to do with this promotional work by the official Norwegian design community.

Lotte's popularity in Canada led the Montreal department store Birk's to invite Turid Gramstad Oliver over for their "Scandinavian week" in 1967. She sat in the department store making sketches for her decor designs, and her mission was especially to "show the Canadians how she made the decor for the Lotte service, how she composed the joyous patterns."³⁵ Although Gramstad Oliver's visit to Montreal coincided with the *EXPO 67*, it had nothing to do with this huge manifestation. Nor was she or Figgjo represented at the Norwegian exhibition at *EXPO 67*, as this showed almost exclusively craft products and some prototypes, virtually disregarding industrial design altogether.³⁶

The Australian exhibition was organized by the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) and its sister organizations in Finland, Denmark and Sweden. Just like at *EXPO 67*, there was no sign of Figgjo products at the Australian *Design in Scandinavia* exhibition.³⁷ These two episodes should indicate that the success Figgjo achieved in the 1960s was not because of the promotional work carried out by the official Norwegian design community, but in spite of it. They are also good examples of how poorly coordinated and harmonized the cultural interests and the commercial interests were in the quest for exporting Norwegian design.

An interesting new development in terms of Figgjo's company and product promotion took place at the turn of the decade: The designers suddenly appeared with names and faces in marketing material as the creative souls behind the products. The most fascinating example of this new policy is found in a 1970 brochure where the last page was allotted to a presentation of the 9 designers of the merged Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S, their portraits placed inside conventionalized drawings of flowers and thus forming a bouquet or meadow [Figure 19-10]. It thus seems as though Figgjo now had discovered that the designers could be used as poster boys and -girls for their products, lending them a sense of origin, personality and culture.³⁸ Still, the company never made a habit out of this personality cult elsewhere taken to extremes in mythopoeic constructions of the celebrity designer.

As discussed earlier, ambiguity reigned on this subject in the design community. The ceramist and lecturer Jens von der Lippe had earlier in the 1960s applauded what he saw as a recent tendency among manufacturers of identifying and profiling designers for promotional purposes, giving them the artist-like aura of *author*. However pleasant this

35. N.N., "Turi fra Sandnes tegnet Figgjo-dekor i en av Montreals største forretninger" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 1967 (Date left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive) ("vise kanadierne hvordan hun laget dekoren til Lotte-serviset, hvordan hun komponerte de festlige mønstrene.")

36. Liv Schjødt, "Norsk brukskunst på verdensutstillingen i Montreal" in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 121-123

37. Ulf Hård af Segerstad, *et al.* (eds.) *Design in Scandinavia* (Stockholm: Victor Pettersons Bokindustri AB, 1968) unpagged. Some Stavangerflint products designed by Kåre B. Fjeldsaa were selected, but the exhibition was organized before Figgjo and Stavangerflint merged.

38. I have only found one single prior example of such "designer signature marketing" by Figgjo, and that was an advertisement placed in *Bonytt* accompanying the magazine's celebration of Hermann Bongard's Lunning Prize for 1957. This contextually extraordinary advertisement, which was highly extravagant in format (full page) and unusually elegant in form, featured a copy that simply read: "Designers: Hermann Bongard—Rolf Frøyland—Ragnar Grimsrud": *Bonytt*, No. 3, 1958, p 48 ("Formgivere:...")

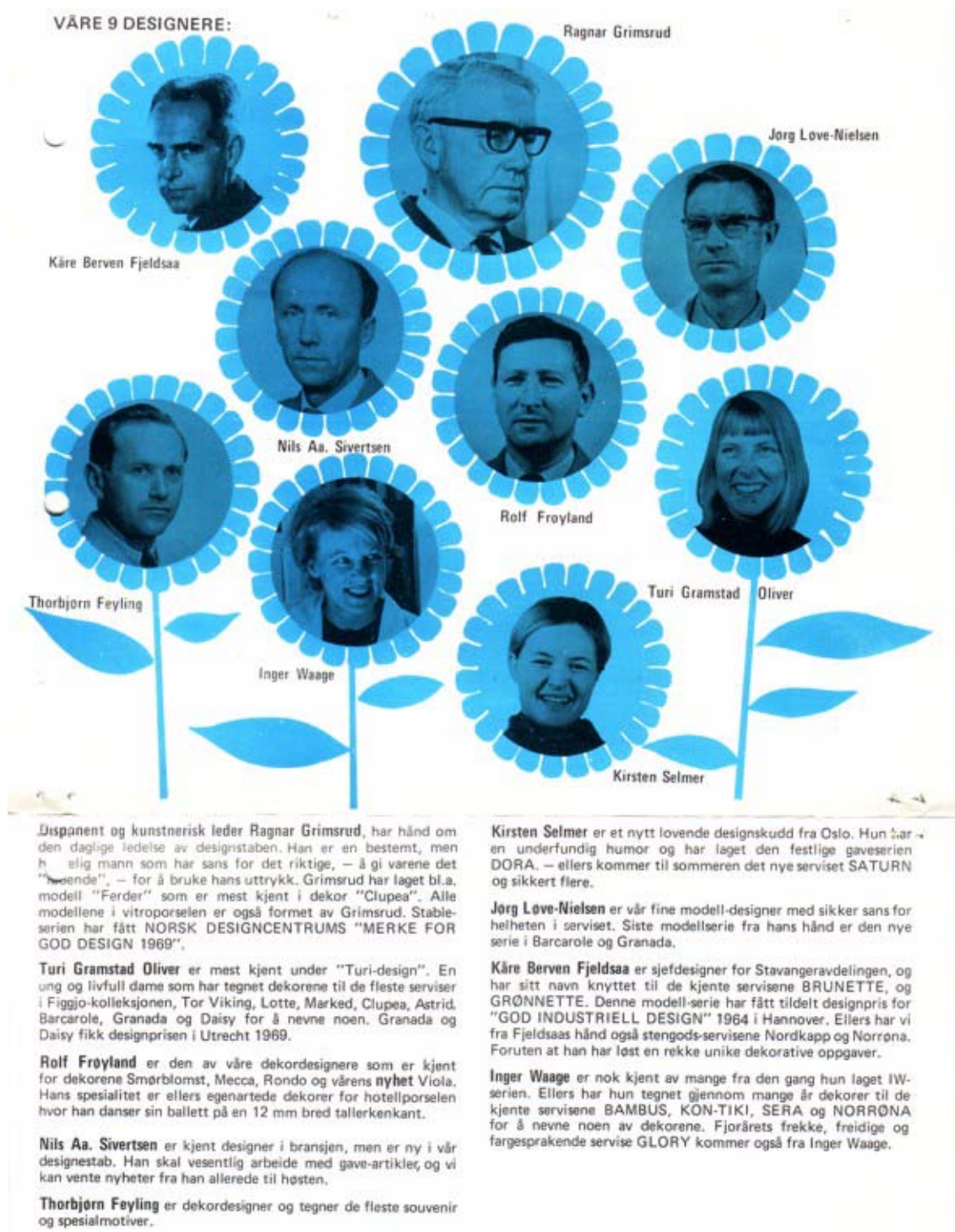


Figure 19–10: From a 1970 brochure presenting “Our 9 designers” as a collection of creative flowers. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

practice was in terms of status for individual designers and the profession, though, von der Lippe cautioned against the potentially harmful consequences of excessive worshipping of the designer, such as self-exaltation, mannerism and fashionism.³⁹ It

took Figgjo eight years to follow the trend von der Lippe proclaimed, but there is little to indicate that this resulted in much self-exaltation to speak of among Figgjo's designers. That they were fashion-conscious, on the other hand, is decidedly true. But, as the above discussion has shown, they were so long before their names and faces turned up in marketing material.

19.4 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed one important segment of Figgjo's product portfolio in the 1960s. The major ambition has been to demonstrate how their highly characteristic decors with exuberant, festive forms can be interpreted as an attempt to domesticate the rather stark modernism of the new service models by embedding them in the emotive allusions these decors could proffer.

Some of the products discussed in this chapter became successful export products for Figgjo, others failed completely in the market place. The strategy of domesticating modern models by a decor of festive forms should thus not be framed as a success story, but deserves attention as a fascinating attempt at finding a third way for the design of tableware between the stark modernism advocated by much of the design elite but largely shunned by the consuming masses and the traditionalesque opulence of ornament that throughout the twentieth century has been portrayed as the dominant preference among the general public. It is thus an excellent example of how design can be conceived as a process of negotiation between various (real, imagined and projected) actors and agendas.

In a broader perspective the new decor design practice discussed in this chapter may be regarded as a direct transformation of the modernist idiom to include formal expressions and communicative devices that hitherto largely had been eschewed. As such, these decor designs tell of a willingness to challenge conventions—both traditionalist and modernist ones—in the effort to construct a type of modern design that would work in the context of 1960s' Norwegian commercial industry.

What all the different design strategies and trajectories discussed hitherto had in common, was that they all shared the same consumer image: the housewife—and sometimes by implication also her husband. So, all the highly different versions of the fashion aspect of design we have seen above were aimed at wooing this mythical key figure. What, then, when Figgjo decided to develop a completely different type of product and had to imagine a completely different consumer? This is the topic of the next chapter.

39. Jens von der Lippe, "Mønstring av brukskunst høsten 1961" in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 17

20 Form, function fiction: Towards a new design practice

20.1 Introduction

The 1962 launch of the Figgjo *3500 Hotel China* series in vitreous china designed and developed especially for the professional market mark a turning point in the company's history. In the course of two decades Figgjo had gone from an amateurish pottery workshop to a highly modern and professional industrial factory, and the *3500 Hotel China* represented a step in a new direction—both in terms of market strategy, product technology and design. How did design for the professional market differ from design for the private market? Why did Figgjo develop a completely new material for this product? What are the concepts that underpin its design, and how did the manufacturer portray its identity? This chapter will investigate how this product broke with the conventions of postwar Norwegian design and manufacture as we have learned to know them thus far.

In addition to studying the strategies and concepts underpinning the design of the hotel china series, the crucial approach in the chapter will be an analysis of how the manufacturer sought to portray this product and how this changed with time: Initially, it was inscribed as science incarnated, and the material morality reigned supreme. But as society's faith in science took some serious blows in the course of the 1960s and modernist design idioms were partly forsaken in the 1970s, the *engineered* tableware became the *fashioned* tableware as trends tamed technology. These translations of technology, design, identity and consumption tell the story of how an artefact is constantly in a state of transformation—on both sides of the factory gate.

The last part of this chapter will discuss the “otherness” of the Figgjo *3500*; i.e. how this product represents a distinctive brake with the more pronounced design ideals in the Norwegian design community at the time. As a matter of rather crude simplification, one might say that here, the Scandinavian Design ethos gave way to an approach seeing design as *scientific operationalism*—a concept normally connected with German design and in particular the Ulm School of Design. But the Figgjo designers came nowhere near this famous institution, and one might ask whether these ideas reached them by social osmosis?

20.2 Material morals: The virtues of vitreous china—Figgjo *3500*

As we have seen, Figgjo had towards the end of the 1950s become a modern industrial company, distancing themselves more and more from the romantic notion of the inspired craftsman turning out soulful creations on his potter's wheel. This process is perhaps best

seen in the distinctive role scientific representations, technological systems and rationalizing principles played in the company's organization, production, identity and image. Still, these attitudes had until now only to a lesser and varying degree made their mark on the products' design and marketing. It was terms like "today's taste", "festive", "cheerful", "modern" and "practical" which were meant to get Figgjo earthenware services into the many homes—not allusions to science and technology.¹

This situation was about to change drastically with the 1962 launch of the new model series 3500, a service intended for the professional kitchens—hotels, restaurants, cafés, cafeterias, galleys, messes, schools, hospitals, institutions, etc. [Figure 20-1].² The simple fact that this product series was referred to only by its serial number can be seen as an inscription of scientificity and professionalism in the product's identity.³ The name of the series (3500) stems from the common denominator of the product number of each and every item the series was comprised of (a cup or a plate had product numbers like 3557 or 3504). This latter system was neither original nor new: Every item belonging to the earlier (and later) earthenware services had such three or four digit product numbers where the two last identified the object in question and the first one or two revealed which service series they belonged to. But the earthenware service series were never publicly spoken of as the 200, the 400 or the 700 series—they were all given additional, more depicting and representing names such as *Jarlsberg*, *Morgedal* and *Akershus* (all Norwegian place names with strong cultural and historical allusions). The same shift can be found in the name of the accompanying decors. The decors accompanying the new 3500 series were given names such as *F-25*, *F-26*, etc., whereas the decors for the earlier earthenware services were given either girl's names (e.g. *Marie*, *Grete* or *Sissel*) or nature names (e.g. *Solbakken* (Sun Hill), *Gullrose* (Gold Rose) or *Høstløv* (Autumn Leaves))—the latter strategy most probably being an inscription motivated by a perceived need to humanize and naturalize these products.

Such needs were thus not present when inscribing the new 3500 series, as it was intended for the professional market—not for private homes. 3500 was to procure subscriptions from professional purchasers, restaurant managers, institutional directors,

-
1. The terms are quotes from advertisements for various 1950s Figgjo services (Figgjo archive) ("tidens smak", "festlig", "muntert", "moderne", "praktisk")
 2. In the beginning the term *Hotel China* was used as a collective term for what was actually two model series, both in vitreous china. A series called 3000 (later 3100) was presented as "Hotel ware: The models... are soft and rounded and the shapes thus have a certain 'private' character": *Figgjo Hotel China for hotel, kafeteria og skipsservering* (Press release, undated—Figgjo archive) ("Hotellvare: Modellene... er myke og avrundete og formene har derved en viss 'privat' karakter") The 3000 models were thus alternative cups and plates (the other parts were identical) of a more traditional shape intended for clients in the professional market who might find the design of the 3500 series too radical. I will here concentrate on the latter, partly because it represented a far more thorough interpretation of the concept, partly because the 3000/3100 series never became as important a product as the 3500 series would.
 3. The term *Hotel China* was never really used as a name for the series, so I find it appropriate to regard 3500 as the model name—this is the also the name still used today (Although sometimes now called just 35 or 3500/2000 and include the 2000 series, which is identical in design, only somewhat thinner and lighter material). Producers/engineers/designers/marketers can be said to supply products with an operating manual or recipe—a *script*. Actions that create the many different aspects of such a script can thus be called *inscriptions*: Madeleine Akrich, "The De-scription of Technological Objects" in Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (eds.), *Shaping Technology/Building Society—Studies in sociotechnical change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) p 208



Figure 20–1: The 3500-series (Vitreous China) Figgjo, 1962. Designer: Ragnar Grimsrud. This picture is taken from a 1964 catalogue. The lack of domestic accessories surrounding the product, the stark background and the trolley in chromium plated tubular steel make the message crystal clear: This product is not intended for the home, but for the professional kitchen. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

etc.—not seduce housewives.⁴ The choice of supplying the product’s socio-technical script with allusions to industry, science and technology by way of using “rational” and “objective” number designations in stead of the more explicitly emotionally charged

4. I here mean “subscription” both in the literal sense—signing sales contracts—but also in the figurative sense—acceptance of, sympathy with, understanding of and trust in the product by subscribing to its script. For more on how the latter sense functions, see: Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies” in Bijker and Law (eds.), *op.cit.* p 261

place/nature/girl's names can only be understood properly when keeping this essential reorientation in market strategy in mind.⁵

Of course, a lot more than the name was different about the 3500 series with regard to previous Figgjo products. As already mentioned, this service was intended for a completely different market segment. In order to understand the background for Figgjo's decision to invest vast resources in developing a product specifically for this market segment, we must lift our gaze for a moment and look at the bigger picture. A potential market for the 3500 series was grounded in a massive increase in the number of public kitchens and canteens during the previous 15 years. This increase can in turn be attributed to the following development patterns in society at large:

The social democratic government and the new, strengthened and vigorous bureaucracy had since the end of World War II embarked on a massive development of schools, hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes and other institutions, and also the public administration itself expanded to dimensions previously unheard of. The national business policy, international economic trends, tariff regulations and trade agreements, the Marshall aid, private investment eagerness and enthusiasm made for a vast industrial development. With this process came many large workplaces, the shipping industry flourished, and a multitude of ferry services were established. In accordance with the public's general increase in prosperity and the dawning consumer and leisure society came good times for and massive expansions in the tourist, hotel and restaurant industries.

Our little excursion into the society at large also has another function. It demonstrates with utmost clarity how product development and social development can not be treated as autonomous phenomena, but must be understood as a *seamless web* where development takes place simultaneously and in correlation.⁶ Furthermore, this little epistle shows very well how sociotechnical situations—like a product development process—involves a large number of highly dissimilar actors, and how the actor network's extension and momentum, plus the strength of its nodes is of major importance to the situation's development and future fate.⁷

Just how many new commercial kitchens, galleys, canteens, cafés, cafeterias and restaurants the above mentioned development produced is hard to estimate, but there can be no doubt that this sector around 1960 had come to constitute a substantial market

5. It has been suggested that the script of any given product can be divided into two sub-categories: The physical script which seeks to communicate the product's intended utilitarian functions, and the socio-technical script which seeks to communicate certain attitudes and values connected with the product: Marit Hubak, "The Car as a Cultural Statement" in Merete Lie and Knut H. Sørensen (eds.), *Making Technology Our Own?—Domesticating Technology into Everyday Life* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996) p 175

6. The American historian of technology Thomas P. Hughes launched the term *the seamless web of sociotechnology* in his studies of how technological systems (in his case: electric power networks) are built and developed. His point was that many of the most prominent actors and problems in the development process were not of a technological nature *per se*, but spanned a vast array of topics and fields such as e.g. law, economics, politics, etc. I believe these views to be just as valid regarding studies of product development and design. See: Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power—Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983)

7. Bruno Latour, *Science in Action—How to follow scientists and engineers through society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987) p 179-213

potential. But this market sector had a character and a construction completely different from the markets Figgjo had been catering to this far. Hence, enrolling these new and different actors, with their different agendas and positions, required new market and design strategies.

The 3500 series was Figgjo's first product intended for commercial kitchens and institutional households, but that does not mean that they were the first to discover this market segment. Quite on the contrary; both their major Norwegian competitors, Stavangerflint and Porsgrund had discovered the professional market as well. About the same time Figgjo launched the 3500, Stavangerflint came up with a "Hotel- hospital and ship service" based on their existing *Utstein* model designed by Eystein Sandnes in the mid-fifties.⁸ Porsgrund had presented their hotel service *Form*, designed by Tias Eckhoff and Andreas Gauslaa, already in 1952.⁹ In 1960, Figgjo had not decided on how to relate to the professional market. They were currently struggling with how to undertake rationalizations through cuts in the model range, and thus hesitated to venture into a market segment which in their view would require a whole new product spectre and thus an expansion of the model range. To Figgjo, the stakes were extra high because they—as opposed to their competitor Stavangerflint—did not consider earthenware to be a suitable material for products intended for the professional market.¹⁰ The innovative element in Figgjo's entry into this market segment was thus not primarily of a market strategic nature, but was rather to be found in the development of material and product.

Stavangerflint and Porsgrund used their traditional materials—earthenware and feldspar porcelain respectively—also in their products intended for the professional market, although in a thicker version than in their household services. Figgjo, on the other hand, chose a different strategy; to develop a completely new material quality which properties were particularly appropriate for products for the institutional household market. This decision had wide-ranging consequences and implications, and it is no wonder the company management considered the issue carefully before taking the plunge. Not only was the research and development of a new material and the design of a radically different product series a costly affair, but keeping productions runs based on two different materials would require both careful planning and additional resources. Just the fact that the new material would require baking at higher temperatures than earthenware can illustrate this predicament: The solution would have to be the heavy investment in a new kiln or a meticulous production planning. In this discussion, the managing director, Harald Lima, even raised the question of whether they should change the entire production from earthenware to the new material (which was already under development) which he referred to as "semiporcelain".¹¹ Lima's idea would eventually prove victorious—Figgjo gave up earthenware production completely in the mid-1980s—but at the time the chosen solution was a dual model.

8. Stavangerflint sales catalogue (Undated, ca. 1962-1963—Figgjo archive) ("Hotell- sykehus og skipsservis")

9. Alf Bøe, *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år* (Porsgrund/Oslo: Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik/Tanum, 1967) p 229

10. Minutes from production committee (produksjonsutvalget) meeting 23.03.1960 (Figgjo archive)

11. Minutes from management meeting (administrasjonsmøte) 09.05.1960 (Figgjo archive) ("semiporselen")

Experimenting with and developing new material qualities as such was not unheard of at Figgjo. As we have seen, very much effort and resources had been deployed in the development of their own special blend of earthenware in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Furthermore, Grimsrud and his colleagues had in the mid-fifties experimented with prototypes in bone china, although these experiments never resulted in any commercial production.

Although the company management seemed rather undecided in terms of market and product strategies in 1960, the development of the new material intended for the professional product range—the vitreous china—had already begun. In 1959 Figgjo hired the engineer (MSc) Arne Harris Johannessen as head of the laboratory, and his principal task was to lead the development of the new material. Vitreous china is a particularly hard, sintered porcelain material. It is baked at a temperature somewhat higher than earthenware, but lower than feldspar porcelain. While the earthenware is porous, the sintering makes vitreous china a completely dense material. These material properties were heavily emphasized in the promotion of the new product. A press release from the introduction states that:

The mass is heavy and solid, with no or completely insignificant porosity... Strong light passes through, and it is completely appropriate to characterize the product as porcelain. It has very high impact resistance, created to endure rough handling in service, washing-up and stacking... The glazing is hard, as smooth as a millpond and sanitary.¹²

It is also interesting to note that it was deemed necessary to substantiate the “league promotion” from earthenware to porcelain by referring to the material’s translucency, which can be said to be the “litmus test” of porcelain quality. Still, it was unquestionably the material’s technological properties that were highlighted—not traits like refinement and delicacy, which are usually emphasized regarding other porcelain qualities.

The material technology and its incubator—the laboratory—became central actors in the inscription of scientificity and rationality in the *3500* series. In an early brochure, the superiority of Figgjo vitreous china compared to feldspar porcelain is demonstrated by letting laboratory head engineer (MSc) Arne Harris Johannessen, wearing his white lab coat, pose bent over the impact strength instrument in reticent concentration. On the shelves behind the scientist, chemical bottles are lined up. This picture is flanked by graph paper where a meticulously composed bar chart illustrates the triumph of modern, technologically progressive Figgjo over their competitors [Figure 20-2]. This glimpse of insight into the stronghold of science is then substantiated and described by an accompanying text:

The services in hotels and commercial kitchens must be able to endure severe strain. Work there is fast and efficient—knocks and blows are inevitable. After years of intensive work in our laboratory, the laboratory head, engineer (MSc) Arne Harris Johannessen, can

12. *Figgjo Hotel China for hotel, kafeteria og skipsservering* (Press release, undated—Figgjo archive) (“Massen er tung og fast, men ingen eller helt ubetydelig porøsitet... Sterkt lys går igjennom, og det er helt på sin plass å karakterisere varen som porselen. Den er meget slagfast, skapt for å tåle røff behandling i servering, oppvask og stabling... Glasuren er hard, speilende blank og sanitær.”)

FIGGJO HOTELLPORSELEN HAR EKSTRA STOR SLAGSTYRKE




Servisene på hotell- og storkjøkken skal kunne tåle harde påkjenninger. Det arbeides fort og effektivt, — knubb og slag kan ikke unngås. Etter års intensst arbeide i vårt laboratorium kan endelig laboratoriesjefen, siviling. Arne Harris Johannessen, stille en spesialmasse for hotellporselelen til rådighet for vår produksjon. Prøvene i slagstyrkeapparatet forteller oss at Figgjo hotellporselelen har større slagstyrke enn vanlig kontinentalporselelen. Godset er hvitt og sterkt lys slipper gjennom.

FIGGJO HOTELLPORSELEN ER SÆRDELES SLITESTERKT

Figgjo hotellporselelen har en speilende blank glasar som vi **garanterer fri for sprekkdannelse i ubegrenset tid.**

Autotrykk, Sandnes

Figure 20–2: Brochure for the Figgjo 3500 series hotel china from the early 1960s depicting laboratory head engineer (MSc) Arne Harris Johannessen performing impact resistance tests of the products. The persuasive powers of science were scrupulously exploited in their first campaign directed towards the professional market. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

finally place a special material for hotel china at disposal to our production. The tests in the impact resistance instrument tell us that Figgjo hotel china has higher impact resistance than ordinary continental china.¹³

We thus see how Figgjo believed that the professional market “expected efficiency”, and that their strategy for meeting this perceived expectation to a large extent was based on the enrolment of actors associated with science and material technology in the construction of the network. Furthermore; the qualities these actors brought forward were diligently inscribed into the product’s script—both in the physical script in terms of the altered utilitarian-functional qualities the vitreous china heralded, but perhaps even more so in the socio-technical script by way of heavily charging all communication of product identity with all sorts of emotional allusions science and material technology could offer.

This enrolment of new actors in the name of science would become even more evident when Figgjo’s vitreous china underwent further development around 1970 in order to improve the qualities of the material. This project came about as a result of feedback showing that many customers requested thinner material in the hotel china. In order to comply with this request without compromising the product’s impact resistance, something had to be done with the material.¹⁴ The solution would be to introduce corundum (aluminium oxide) to the mass, something that resulted in a substantial improvement of the strength of the material. Figgjo’s own laboratory no longer had sufficient expertise, authority and trenchancy, and hence heavier artillery was brought out. The material development was conducted in close collaboration with the National Institute of Industrial Research (Sentralinstituttet for industriell forskning—SI) and was partially funded by the Royal Norwegian Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige forskningsråd—NTNF).¹⁵

This example also shows how product development is a protracted, complex and dialectical process. This redesign of the product was a direct consequence of how users had subscribed/*de-inscribed* the hotel china’s script and *domesticated* the 3500 service.¹⁶ Redesign can thus be understood as a re-inscription of the product based on feedback from users, an attempt to equip it with a new and improved script which conforms better to the situation’s *pre-inscription*; the users’ expected previous knowledge and requests.¹⁷

13. *Figgjo hotellporselen* (Brochure, undated—Figgjo archive) (“Servisene på hotell- og storkjøkken skal kunne tåle harde påkjenninger. Det arbeides fort og effektivt—knubb og slag kan ikke unngås. Etter års intenst arbeide i vårt laboratorium kan endelig laboratoriesjefen, siviling. Arne Harris Johannessen, stille en spesialmasse for hotellporselen til rådighet for vår produksjon. Prøvene i slagstyrkeapparatet forteller oss at Figgjo hotellporselen har større slagstyrke enn vanlig kontinentalporselen.”)

14. Minutes from design meeting (designmøte) 22.04.1968 (Figgjo archive)

15. Olav Joa, “Fra tørket leire til brent vitroporselen” in Ulf-E. Rosenberg (ed.), *Figgjo—formet av entusiasme i 60 år: 1941-2001* (Figgjo: Figgjo AS, 2001) p 22

16. For an introduction to the concept of *domestication*, see: Roger Silverstone, Eric Hirsch and David Morley, “Information and Communication Technologies and the Moral Economy of the Household” in Roger Silverstone and Eric Hirsch (eds.), *Consuming Technologies—Media and Information in Domestic Spaces* (London: Routledge, 1992) p 15-31, Lie and Sørensen (eds.), *op.cit.* and Tomas Berker, Maren Hartmann, Yves Punie and Katie J Ward (eds.), *Domestication of Media and Technology* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006). The concept and its relevance to design history is discussed in Chapter 4 above.

After having enrolled actors with a scientific credibility of this calibre (SI and NTNF), one might expect an even more intense focus on aspects related to material technology in the inscription work than what we have seen was the case in the early days of the 3500. But what happens is that these aspects are somewhat de-emphasized in the 1970s in favour of an increased attention to properties related to use and appearance. I find it very plausible that this process is related to the general setback suffered by the “lab coat fetishism” which had been so prominent in society at large in the 1950s. As such, it might also be seen as a reflection of the above discussed loss of faith in rationality, science and progress as the universal remedy for design in the course of the 1960s.

The 3500 series became a veritable and massive success for Figgjo, and the company attributed much of the honour to the material itself. In 1968 the managing director of the newly merged company Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S, Sigurd Jensen, expressed fear of increased competition from Porsgrund and Egersund (Porsgrund had taken over Egersund in 1967) if they—as he expected—would launch products in vitreous china. He believed this would be a great threat, especially if Porsgrund’s reputable and competent designers Tias Eckhoff and Eystein Sandnes were assigned to the case.¹⁸ Figgjo thus decided to initiate lobbyism in order to prevent this: “The management is to try to sway Porsgrunn [sic] into not producing vitreous china in hotel ware” was one of the conclusions when new strategies were drawn up in the merged company Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S.¹⁹ Whether or not this initiative was decisive is unknown, but Figgjo would remain the sole Norwegian manufacturer of vitreous china.²⁰

It was not just in terms of material qualities Figgjo tried sending science in the back entrance, though. The design of the new products in vitreous china was also portrayed as the result of a process equally deductive, logical and scientific as was the laboratory work described above. Certainly, a press release from the introduction of the product stated that the series has “a range of models which correspond to our day’s high demands for rational and at the same time tasteful form.”²¹ But in spite of this in principle equal status attributed to the rational and the tasteful, the rhetoric accompanying the Figgjo 3500 series in the 1960s clearly dominated by notions of economy and rationality.

One of the core principles that Ragnar Grimsrud and Figgjo really cultivated in the 3500 series was ease of stacking. This property is of course very important to commercial kitchens and institutional households, since they normally have large quantities of service to store in a limited space. The most characteristic design trait of the 3500 series, then, is the shape of the cups. All the cups were cylindrical, and the lower

17. Akrich and Latour, *op.cit.* p 259-264. See also Chapter 4 above. For an articulation of the creative capacity of users and their role in the design of products/technology, see: Nelly Oudshoorn and Trevor Pinch (eds.), *How Users Matter—The co-construction of users and technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003)

18. Minutes from design meeting (designmøte) 22.04.1968 (Figgjo archive)

19. Minutes from policy meeting at Figgjo 12.01.1968 (Figgjo archive) (“Ledelsen skal prøve å påvirke Porsgrunn [sic] til ikke å lage vitroporselen i hotellvarer”)

20. Sigurd Jensen’s fear may have been exaggerated, because the Egersund project proved to become a gigantic loss to Porsgrund, and production there was discontinued a few years later.

21. *Figgjo Hotel China for hotel, kafeteria og skipsservering* (Press release, undated—Figgjo archive) (“en modellrekke som tilsvarer tidens store krav til rasjonell og samtidig smakfull form.”)

part, below the handle, was given quite large groove. These two radical features made it possible to stack the cups in tall, compact and stable stacks. In addition, the underside of the saucer was designed so that it fitted into/on top of the cups in order to facilitate stacking of sets of cup and saucer.

Whereas traditional cups had not always been all that easy to stack, plates have always been possible to stack. Still, the plates of the 3500 series were also designed to improve ease of stacking. This was done by removing the customary base ring under the plate, thereby reducing the stacking height with about 25-30% compared to conventional plates. But this action could not have been taken without at the same time making an improvement in baking technology. Normally, plates stand on the base ring whilst being baked, something which also results in them lacking glazing under the base ring. At Figgjo, the product management and kiln crews found a way of stacking plates onto the kiln wagons so that the plates hung by their sides in stead of standing on the base ring. This method made it possible to glaze the entire underside of the plates, something that in turn made it possible to remove the base ring of the 3500 plates. Another advantage of this was that it eliminated the considerable wear and tear on the top side glazing caused by the unglazed base ring during stacking.²² Furthermore, other product types with no traditions for stacking were made stackable. The jugs and pots were given a completely flat bottom and equally flat lids. Combined with handles and spouts which did not exceed the height of the body, these features made it possible to stack even these normally space demanding products.

There can be no doubt that ease of stacking was an actual, essential and genuine aspect of such a product's range of use. These features of the design of the 3500 series can thus be characterized as motivated by utilitarian functionality. But in the promotion and presentation of the product, the stackability was at times overexposed and overstated *in absurdum*—as in the case of the above mentioned brochure.²³ Its cover is adorned with a photo of various items from the 3500 series stacked in unsuspected heights. We can count about 20 coffee and teapots stacked on top of each other, ca 25 cups, and *hundreds* of plates. The absurdity of this illustration is enhanced by the fact that the picture is just a cutout, a section of the complete setting—the stacks seem to perpetuate both upwards and downwards [Figure 20-3].

Long experience from commercial kitchens and institutional households is not needed to see how dysfunctional and irrational such a stacking would be in real life. However, this surrealist and dysfunctional portrayal of the products' design was by all accounts intentional, a conscious and deliberate overstatement—with a not unimportant element of humour. Across the picture of the sky-high towers of tableware is written the title and slogan of the brochure: "Figgjo hotel china—the highest economy for all commercial kitchens".²⁴ The suggested analogy between high stacks of china and high economy might seem a little far-fetched, but the most interesting about it is that it reveals a distinct will—at least occasionally—to forsake function in favour of fiction.

22. N.N., "Nytt porselens-produkt på markedet fra Figgjo" in *Stavanger Aftenblad*, 1962 (Date left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive)

23. *Figgjo hotellporselen* (Brochure, undated—Figgjo archive)

24. *Ibid.* ("Figgjo hotellporselen—den høyeste økonomi for alle storkjøkken")



Figure 20–3: Brochure for the Figgjo 3500 series hotel china from the early 1960s with a striking overstatement of the product’s stackability. The somewhat absurd illustration is topped off with the use of double meaning in the slogan: “The highest economy for all commercial kitchens”. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

Flexibility and multifunctionality are other catchwords that characterize the design of the 3500 series. One way of providing flexibility was to offer alternative options and combinations regarding items and components. For instance, the series included cups and mugs in many different sizes and volumes, and also a sizable variation of jugs and pots. This was perceived as necessary in order to meet the customers' requirements concerning flexible use and service. Product diversity was thus seen as essential on some areas, but it also had its obvious disadvantages both for users (purchase costs and storage space) and producer (increased production complexity). To compensate for this, the design comprised the principle of multifunctionality of piece parts and elements where possible. Examples of this feature are that all cups and mugs fit the same saucer, and that one and the same lit fit all the pots. By so doing, the total number of items, both for production and storage, was reduced.

The 3500 series also offered several other unconventional design solutions. The plates had a very narrow flange in order to maximise the eating area in proportion to the total diameter. The soup bowls had two handles in an integrated saucer so that they would be easier to carry when filled with hot content. The base ring of the cups had three openings to secure good drainage in the dishwasher and in case of spill. All these details seem to be examples of design solutions genuinely motivated by aspects of utilitarian functionality.

Another design solution that was portrayed as a purely scientific, rational, logical and above all functional consequence was the shape of the cups' handles: "The cups' handles are rounded downwards. This provides an excellent handle which is difficult to damage."²⁵ That the top of the handles was rounded downwards was thus explained with functional reasons: since these were cups that were to endure rough treatment, the handles had to be rounded downwards in order for them to be less vulnerable to damage.

Based on this argumentation it is intriguing to note that this handle shape was abandoned shortly after (ca 1964) and replaced with a handle with a flat, horizontal top [Figure 20-4]. I have not been able to establish what caused this redesign of the handle, but it might have been motivated by e.g. relations concerning manufacturing technology, ergonomics or aesthetics.²⁶ Whatever the cause, it seems highly implausible that one would choose to carry out a redesign that would result in an increased risk of breakage. Keeping this in mind, the manufacturer's functionalist explanation for the rounded handle now suddenly appears far less rational and scientific. Or in other words: the seemingly functionalistic design ethos is given a fascinating appearance of fiction.

This latter observation may require closer consideration: By claiming that the handle's form is a direct consequence of (one aspect of) its utilitarian function, the producer—or at least its management and marketing department—professed the functionalist idiom. The fundamental doctrine here is notoriously the maxim "form follows function", as formulated by the American architect Louis Sullivan in 1896.²⁷

25. *Figgjo Hotel China for hotel, kafeteria og skipsservering* (Press release, undated—Figgjo archive) ("Koppenes hanker er avrundet nedover. Det gir en utmerket hank som er vanskelig å få ram på.")

26. Grimsrud's colleague Jørg Løve Nielsen believes Grimsrud did this redesign as a response to feedback from customers and sales organisation, but it is unclear if their concerns were primarily aesthetic or ergonomic/functional: Jørg Løve Nielsen in conversation with the author, 01.03.2006



Figure 20-4: Left: An early presentation photo of the 3500 series showing the original cup handle with rounded top. Right: The new, angular cup handles as they have appeared since the redesign in 1964-1965. (Photos from Figgjo archive)

The Norwegian design historian Jan Michl has demonstrated how Sullivan’s maxim, and consequently also the core concept of functionalism, is based on the premise that any and every function require or determine *one and only one* correct form for the product intended to perform/facilitate the given function.²⁸ Ergo; when an already “correct” form (as Figgjo claimed the original handle represented) can be altered without a corresponding prior alteration in the function, this completely undermines the argument of the functionally determined form—which thus becomes fiction. In any case, this somewhat quaint little anecdote testifies to the elusive character of functionalism and its central tenet. As the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard has put it: “Every object claims to be functional, just as every regime claims to be democratic. The term evokes all the virtues of modernity, yet it is perfectly ambiguous.”²⁹

20.3 Trends taming technology: Renegotiating the 3500

We have now seen how Figgjo constructed, inscribed, conceived and presented the 3500 series as a high-tech product which design was based on scientific and rational principles,

27. The original wording is “form ever follows function”: Louis Sullivan, “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered” (1896) in Louis Sullivan, *Kindergarten Chats (revised 1918) and other writings* [edited by Isabella Athey] (New York: George Wittenborn, 1947) p 202-208

28. Jan Michl, “On the Rumor of Functional Perfection” in *Pro Forma* (Oslo: SHKS) No. 2, 1990-1991, p 67-81 and Jan Michl, “Form Follows *WHAT?*—the modernist notion of function as a *carte blanche*” in *1:50—Magazine of the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning* [Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa] No. 10, 1995, p 31-20

29. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996) p 63

and that this strategy is best understood as a mode/setting/situation constructed in the relation between Figgjo's identity as an industrial company and the perceived needs and desires of commercial kitchens and institutional households. But not even in the 1960s were the institutional directors and purchasing managers considered to be *absolutely* rational decision-makers. That is why even such a "rational" product like the 3500 series already from the introduction was offered with something so "irrational" as decor. Nevertheless, even the decor was often attempted rationalized and scientified. A recurring theme in this respect was that it was always emphasized that "[t]he decor is in underglaze quality and hence of unlimited durability."³⁰

At the time of the introduction, five different "serial ribbon decors" (*serieborder*) were offered, designed by Rolf Frøyland, head of the decor design department, and Hermann Bongard. Of these, the one called *F-25*, designed by Frøyland, would prove the more popular. This decor was made up of tiny, slightly conventionalized forks and spoons placed alternating to form a ribbon [Figure 20-5]. Even though this decor thus was composed of two figurative elements, these were so small and so many that the ribbon got a virtually abstract appearance and character. Later in the 1960s the optional decor system was greatly expanded by the introduction of a wide range of so-called "standard ribbon decors" (*standardborder*), i.e. decors that, as opposed to the "serial ribbon decors" were not stock items, but still could be delivered on short notice. The design of the "standard ribbon decors" varied from one-coloured lines to various kinds of flower vines.

A very important weapon in the fight over the professional customers was the ability to offer custom-made decors. In a catalogue from ca 1970, the advantages of this feature was presented as follows: "If You want distinctiveness for **Your place**, the service helps dot the i—Our large staff of designers is at Your disposal to make precisely YOUR own decor or vignette."³¹ This great offer for artistic "tailoring" as decor on an industrial "off-the-rack" product was then illustrated by examples from Figgjo's portfolio for the 3500 which included customers spanning from The Norwegian Women's Public-Health Association (Norske Kvinners Sanitetsforening) to the Israeli Hotel Romat Aviv. Likewise, a newspaper advertisement from 1964 boasted about the fact that

Figgjo Hotel China [with custom-made decor] has been preferred by THE WEST NORWAY HOME FOR THE MENTALLY DEFICIENT [and]... the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration.³² [Figure 20-6]

This decor strategy, as design practice, can be seen as an attempt to offer tools for or facilitate the users'—or rather the customers' (as the customers in this case rarely were identical with the end users)—domestication of a product which basically was presented

30. *Figgjo Hotel China for hotel, kafeteria og skipsservering* (Press release, undated—Figgjo archive) ("Dekoren er i underglasurkvalitet og dermed ubegrenset holdbar.")

31. *Katalog for storkjøkkenserviser* (Catalogue, undated—Figgjo archive) ("Vil De ha særpreg over **Deres sted**, er serviset med og setter prikken over i'en—Vår store designstab står til Deres disposisjon for å lage nettopp DERES egen dekor eller vignett.")

32. Advertisement in *Bergens Tidende*, 1964 (Date left out of the clipping—Figgjo archive) ("Figgjo Hotel Porselen er blitt foretrukket av VESTLANDSHEIMEN FOR ÅNDSVEIKE... Norges Handelshøyskole")



Figure 20–5: Cup, saucer and plate from the Figgjo 3500 series with the *F-25* decor designed by Rolf Frøyland. (Photo from Figgjo archive)

as scientific, technological, rational and economical—but which then also ran the risk of being perceived as impersonal and “wild” or “untamed”. Both the “serial ribbon decors” and the “standard ribbon decors” were in reality ways of suggesting domestication strategies to the customers. They can thus be said to have made up crucial parts of the product’s script, as *prescriptions* or *proscriptions*—affordances and allowances that seek to demarcate the users’ sphere of action by allowing certain actions and forbidding others.³³

In the 1970s, both the decors and the marketing took a more trend conscious direction. That is not to say that the decors and the marketing of the 1960s did not relate to perceived needs and desires of the market—as we have just seen, this was very much

33. Akrich and Latour, *op.cit.* p 261.



Figure 20–6: Advertisement for Figgjo 3500 with custom-made decor in the newspaper *Bergens Tidende* in 1964—illustrated by the decor designed for the West Norway Home for the Mentally Deficient (Vestlandsheimen for åndsveike). (Facsimile of advertisement in Figgjo archive)

the case. But the shift from sense towards sensibility is nevertheless remarkable. While the typical decors of the 1960s had dispassionate, rationalizing names like *F-25* and *F-26*, the new, trendy decors of the 1970s were given names that much more explicitly strove to appeal to emotions, such as *Bistro*, *Gastro* and *Pizza*. The design of the decors went from minute, conventionalized or abstract pattern ribbons to mono-coloured wide

bands in the most trendy colours of the day, like chocolate brown (*Bistro*), olive-green (*Gastro*) and ochre (*Pizza*). It is important to note that the design of these new decors was closely linked to changes in production technology. Their broad, coloured bands were applied using new machines constructed for this very purpose [Figure 20-7]. This is

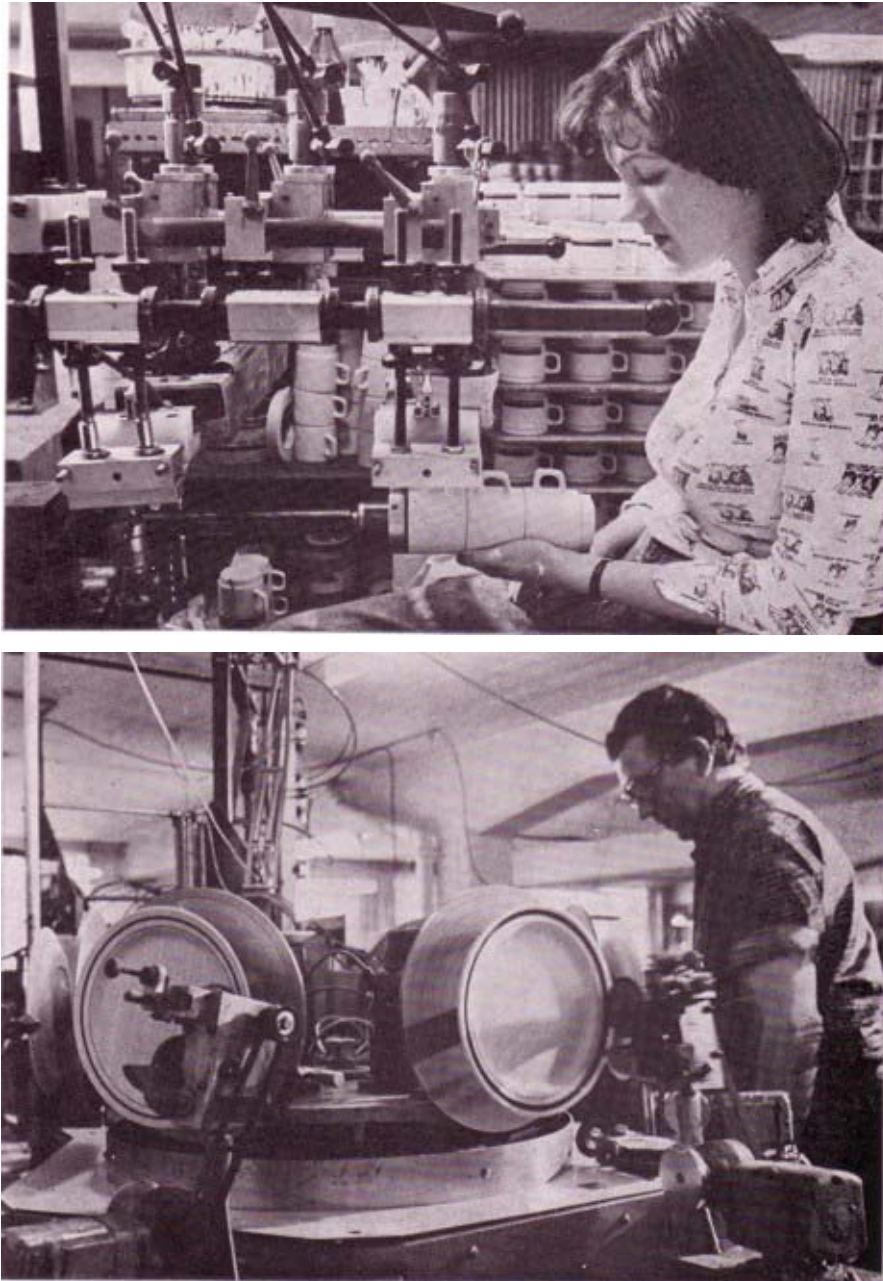


Figure 20–7: The new machines for applying the broad-banded decors of the Figgjo 3500 in the 1970s. (Photos from Figgjo archive)

a simple, yet illustrative example of how both technological, economic, cultural and social matters are brought into play and that such situations consequently are best understood as a *seamless web of sociodesign*.

That the last-mentioned decor was named after this characteristic dish was of course neither accidental nor purposeless. The presentation photo from a leaflet is staged in a very telling way: A slice of pizza is arranged on a plate in front of other service parts, while the rest of the pizza can be seen in the lower right corner. Other trendy accessories, such as garlic vines, bell peppers and an oil carafe, dazzle in the background [Figure 20-



Figure 20–8: Figgjo 3500 series with the *Pizza* decor from ca 1970. Technology trying to be trendy? (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

8]. Seen in retrospect, from our society and culture today where pizza is often considered to be trivial and anything but a status symbol, this inscription might seem somewhat odd. But, as the Norwegian social anthropologist Runar Døving writes, the identity of the pizza was completely different in Norway around 1970:

Skyberg was a busy professional woman. She has just returned from a trip to Italy, and wants to serve her guests something exclusive and distinguished. Using pizza in an equivalent situation today is unthinkable for the middle class. Pizza was, in other words, a new trend in the party and restaurant culture of the Norwegian middle class in the 1960s, a modern hit in gastronomy. Around 1970 middle class people served their guests pizza... [G]ood taste is a class related and historically relative phenomenon. Pizza has changed status from being a distinguished dish to becoming an invective to the same group—and has simultaneously become unhealthy food.³⁴

A similar remark is made by the novelist Dag Solstad in order to explain precisely how *chic* it was when his history student protagonist in 1968 was served pizza for Sunday dinner by his 22 year old pedigree wife: “because pizza had still not been discovered by the populace and was eaten exclusively in intellectual circles.”³⁵ It is thus a highly trend-conscious attitude that forms the basis for the decor design strategy for the 3500 series in the 1970s. This is expressed in the marketing rhetoric as well. In a 3500 *Pizza* leaflet text it is the emotional values that are given precedence:

“Pizza” [is] [m]ade especially for the modern environment in hotel, restaurant, cafeteria and the private home. Large colour surfaces in yellow and white facilitate daring colour combinations.³⁶

The formerly so paramount arguments related to material technology, functional and user friendly design and user economy were still adduced with great pith and pathos, but more explicitly emotional and unscientific modes of expression, like e.g. “modern environment” and “daring colour combinations” were now prioritised. That the private home now for the first time was included in the target group for the 3500 series must also be seen in relation to the product’s new, trendy image. Now, the technology had been sufficiently tamed by trendy decor design so that one considered it possible to try sending science in the back entrance even in the villadom.

20.4 Design as *scientific operationalism*: The otherness of 3500

We have now seen how the 3500 series in the 1960s was portrayed as a moral manifestation of *Science*, and how new actors were enrolled, new identities constructed and new inscriptions assembled in order to achieve this. An important aspect of this work is that aesthetics was very much de-emphasized as an explicit premise of the design process—but its implicit role as conveyor of symbolic values remained essential also in the case of this product.³⁷

The Figgjo 3500 represented a distinct break with the applied art tradition which, as we have seen, to a large extent dominated the Norwegian design debate in the 1950s and 1960s. This tradition was particularly strong in the industrial art sector, which is

34. Runar Døving, *Rype med lettøl—En antropologi fra Norge* (Oslo: Pax, 2003) p 196 (“Skyberg er en travel yrkeskvinne. Hun har nettopp kommet tilbake fra en tur til Italia, og vil servere noe eksklusivt og distingvert til sine gjester. Å bruke pizza i en tilsvarende situasjon i dag er utenkelig for middelklassen. Pizza var med andre ord en ny trend i den norske middelklassens fest- og restaurantkultur i 1960-årene, en moderne hit i gastronomien. Rundt 1970 serverte middelklassefolk pizza til sine gjester... [G]od smak er et klasseorientert og historisk relativt fenomen. Pizza har forandret status fra å være en distingvert rett til å bli et skjellsord for den samme gruppen—og har samtidig blitt usunn mat.”)

35. Dag Solstad, *Roman 1987* (Oslo: Oktober, 1987) p 194 (“for pizza var ennå ikke blitt oppdaget i folkedjupet og blei utelukkende spist i intellektuelle kretser.”)

36. “*Pizza*” (Leaflet, undated—Figgjo archive) (““Pizza” [er] Laget spesielt for moderne miljø innen hotell, restaurant, kafeteria og det private hjem. Store fargeflater i gult og hvitt gir anledning til dristige fargekombinasjoner.”)

normally defined as comprised of glassworks, ceramic industry, furniture manufacturers, etc. Hence, Figgjo could be said to belong to this sector, and Ragnar Grimsrud, who was trained as a craftsman and artist, had in 1962 35 years of experience as a professional “applied artist” (brukskunstner), even though he since 1946 had devoted himself completely to industrial design and management and had little to do with the Oslo dominated applied art community. So even though the company did belong to a traditional industrial art sector and Grimsrud enjoyed great respect as a professional, Figgjo never really was in high regard with the applied art community. For that, Grimsrud was too pragmatic and Figgjo too concerned with rational industrial manufacture and commercially viable business management.

I find it safe to say that Figgjo 3500 was largely ignored by the design elite at the time, at least the traditional applied art community, and has also fallen through art history’s canonizing sifter. It might be mentioned that there are a couple of exceptions that confirm this rule. The first is that Figgjo 3500 was selected for the relatively traditional applied art exhibition *Norwegian Applied Art 1966 (Norsk brukskunst 1966)* in the West Norway Museum of Decorative Art (Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum) in Bergen.³⁸ This event was, however, supported by the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum), something which probably explains the presence of Figgjo 3500 and other examples of industrial design.³⁹ The second exception relates to the latter part of my assertion: The art historian Ivar Stranger did include Figgjo 3500 in his 1991 retrospective exhibition and accompanying catalogue entitled *The Ceramist Ragnar Grimsrud*.⁴⁰

More interesting is the remarkable fact that such a distinctive product from one of only four domestic manufacturers of industrial ceramic tableware was not mentioned *once* in *Bonytt* throughout the entire decade. This fact becomes even more conspicuous when considering that the magazine during the same period *did* present several other, contemporary and later products from foreign manufacturers with properties remarkably similar to those of the Figgjo 3500. Both the two German services Rosenthal/Thomas TC

37. As such, these inscriptions of the Figgjo 3500 may be said to exemplify what the Norwegian design historian Jan Michl has claimed to be a contradictory trait inherent to modernism: that “[the modernist designer’s] *primary* aesthetic aim is to produce forms where the aesthetics play *secondary* role. He condemns lie, immorality and pretence in design, but what he in fact does is *pretending not to pretend*.”: Jan Michl, “Is there a duty to be modern?” in Anty Pansera (ed.), *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L’Arca, 1988) p 5

38. It is interesting to note that Figgjo 3500 here was placed under the heading “porcelain” rather than under “industrial design”. The latter category was used as a collecting tank for the new, unruly, unfamiliar objects brought into the museum by the influence of the Norwegian Design Centre and ID-gruppen—products which did not fit the traditional material-based categories like ceramics, textile, glass, silver, etc. The fact that a decisively industrial product like Figgjo 3500 was categorized alongside pure handicraft products such as e.g. Leif Helge Enger’s chamotte stoneware executed as studio work at Porsgrund, while silver cutlery from three different silversmith companies—David-Andersen, Theodor Olsens Eftf. and J. Tostrup—was categorized as “industrial design” demonstrates how this traditional categorizing map did not fit the terrain any more: Peter Anker, *Norsk brukskunst 1966—keramikk, tekstil, sølv, glass, møbler, porselen, industrial design* (Bergen: Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1966) unpagged

39. *Ibid.* In this connection it is interesting to note that in the catalogue, the designer of Figgjo 3500 was made anonymous—Ragnar Grimsrud’s name was not mentioned anywhere, whereas e.g. the exhibited products from Porsgrund were carefully designated to their “authors”; Tias Eckhoff, Leif Helge Enger and Eystein Sandnes.

40. Ivar Stranger, *Keramikerne Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland kunstnersenter, 1991) p 37-39

100 designed by Hans Roericht and Schönewaldt *Form 498* designed by Heinrich Löffelhardt as well as the Danish Bing & Grøndahl *Form 679* designed by Erik Magnussen were presented in *Bonytt* (1962, 1966 and 1967 respectively) and hailed for their novel design solutions regarding stackability, multi-functionality, modularity, etc.⁴¹ Not only did Figgjo 3500, as we have seen, comprise all these design features which in panegyric wording were hailed in the foreign products—the latter ones also had striking resemblances with the Norwegian service in terms of form and aesthetics.⁴² Add to that the fact that Figgjo 3500 was launched in 1962—the same year Rosenthal/Thomas *TC 100* was presented as a novelty and several years before the Schönewaldt *Form 498* and the Bing & Grøndahl *Form 679* were even conceived. Why, then, *Bonytt* completely ignored the Figgjo 3500 is truly puzzling. On the other hand, it is also somewhat surprising that Figgjo did not ever advertise the 3500 in *Bonytt*. But then again, Figgjo placed the sum total of two (!) advertisements in *Bonytt* throughout the entire 1960s; one in 1960 for the *Lade Edel* set and one in 1964 for the *Nordkapp Lotte* service.⁴³ The disregard seems to have worked both ways.

While *Bonytt* disregarded this quite remarkable product, another publication of great significance in the construction of a modern Norwegian (consumer) society, *The Consumer Report (Forbrukerrapporten)*—published by the Consumers' Council (Forbrukerrådet), made due notice of it. Håkon Flood, professor of inorganic chemistry at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH), acknowledged not only the existence of the new Figgjo product, but also the innovative character of the vitreous china material in his presentation of the different ceramic materials and their properties.⁴⁴ If we imagine a triangle of stakeholders or actor groups consisting of the following spheres: science, market and culture, it can be argued that Figgjo 3500 succeeded well in enrolling the first two, but foundered with the latter.

Despite being ignored by *Bonytt* and the applied art community, Figgjo 3500 did eventually win some acknowledgement in the Norwegian design community. Seven years after the product's introduction, the 3500 series received the Mark of Design Excellence (Merket for god design) for 1969 awarded by the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum). Here, it is interesting to note that Figgjo had unsuccessfully applied for the Norwegian Design Award (Den norske Designpris) for 1962, nominating

41. Liv Schjødt, "Om begrensningens kunst" in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 132-133, Liv Schjødt, "Form og dekor" in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 190-191 and Liv Schjødt, "Et svar på utviklingen" in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 287

42. A fourth product (never presented in *Bonytt*, though), from Finland, had perhaps the most striking similarities to the Figgjo 3500 of all the period's new stackable services specifically designed for the professional market: The 1968 Arabia *GB* service designed by Göran Bäck is so similar—at least in its basic items such as cups, plates, etc.—in concept, program and form to the Figgjo 3500 that it is quite a challenge to distinguish them unless you are a professional or a true *conoscitore* (one difference is that the cups of the Figgjo 3500 have a taller groove on the lower part of their cylindrical body, allowing for more compact stacking than does the lower groove of the Arabia *GB* cups). However, the Finnish service was made of earthenware—a material Figgjo, as we have seen, deemed unsuitable for the professional market and rejected in favour of the new vitreous china: Marjut Kumela, "Suomalaisen kuokapöydän keramiika" in Kirsti Grönholm, Marjut Kumela, Marketta Tamminen and Kaisa Koivisto, *Pöytä koreaksi—Katetun pöydän ja pöytätapojen historia suomessa* (Helsinki, Tammi, 2005) p 115. I have no interest in accusing Arabia/Bäck of plagiarism in design, but I do think it is interesting that they chose to develop and launch such a similar product more than six years after Figgjo 3500.

43. *Bonytt*, No. 4, 1960, p 4 and *Bonytt*, No. 5, 1964, p 10

44. Håkon Flood, "Hva skjuler glasuren" in *Forbrukerrapporten*, 1962, p 25-26

some niche products (most of them designed by Hermann Bongard).⁴⁵ Why Figgjo at that time chose to nominate these products rather than their two new main products, the *1000/Nordkapp* series (launched in 1960 as the model upon which most the services for the domestic market in the 1960s were based) and the recently introduced *3500* series, is unknown and intriguing. Perhaps the company management simply thought that the jury would not award such mundane products, or they might have thought that Bongard's name would be a safer bet than their in-house designers in competition with other "celebrity" designers. Whatever the case might be; when the *3500* series was awarded the Mark of Design Excellence (Merket for god design) for 1969, this acknowledgement was exploited in Figgjo's marketing as well—a practice which was not only accepted, but even suggested and recommended by the award's institutors [Figure 20-9]. Whether or not the award had any effect in the international marketing is hard to say, but the *3500* did become a vital export product. How it ended up on the cover of a glossy magazine like *Canadian Interiors* in 1974 is more mysterious, but an intriguing curiosity nonetheless [Figure 20-10].

As we have seen, this award originated from a collaboration between the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)), the Norwegian Export Council (Norges Eksportråd) and the Federation of Norwegian Industries (Norges Industriforbund). Despite the fact that the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere)—the universalist trade union for practitioners under the auspices of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst)—had been granted the entitlement to appoint one of the members of the jury for the Norwegian Design Centre's Mark of Design Excellence, this award remained an institution established and run by the up-and-coming industrial design community, supported by actors of business policy, and operated at times far beyond the applied art community's control and sphere of interest.⁴⁶

An illustration of how and where the spheres of interest did not overlap can be that among the 48 products to receive the Norwegian Design Centre's Mark of Design Excellence for 1969 alongside Figgjo *3500* we find objects like e.g. the Christiania

45. Letter from jury secretary Alf Kvaal to Figgjo Fajanse A/S with returned photos of the nominated products attached (21.08.1963—Figgjo archive). The Mark of Design Excellence (Merket for god design) was not established until after the Norwegian Design Centre opened in 1965.

46. As mentioned earlier, there are very few direct connections between Figgjo and this more specialised industrial design community around ID-gruppen and the Norwegian Design Centre. Apart from the ones mentioned—ID-gruppen member Hermann Bongard's freelance contract, the 1962 Norwegian Design Award application and the 1969 Mark of Design Excellence—a last event should be noted: In 1957, Figgjo had joined with some other industrial companies in the Sandnes district—Polaris, Kvernelands Fabrikk, Jonas Øglænd and Sandnes Aducerverk—in founding the Technological Collaboration Group (Teknisk samarbeidsgruppe—TESA). In 1970, TESA organised a seminar on industrial design with 27 participants from local industrial companies, and invited Alf Bøe, director of the Norwegian Design Centre, as keynote speaker: Lars Gaute Jøssang, *Industrieventyret på Jæren 1800-2000* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2004) p 226-228. It might also be mentioned that on their promotional tour prior to the Norwegian Design Centre's opening in 1965, its first director Per Aarstad and designer Arne Jon Jutrem visited Stavanger and gave a lecture under the heading "The Norwegian Design Centre at the Service of Norwegian Industry" ("Norsk Designcentrum i norsk industris tjeneste") in Stavanger Trade and Industry Association (Stavanger Haandverk- og Industriforening). Whether anyone from Figgjo was present there is unknown, but plausible: N.N., "Ikke bare Nordens første men Europas største!" in *Stavangeren* 18.04.1964

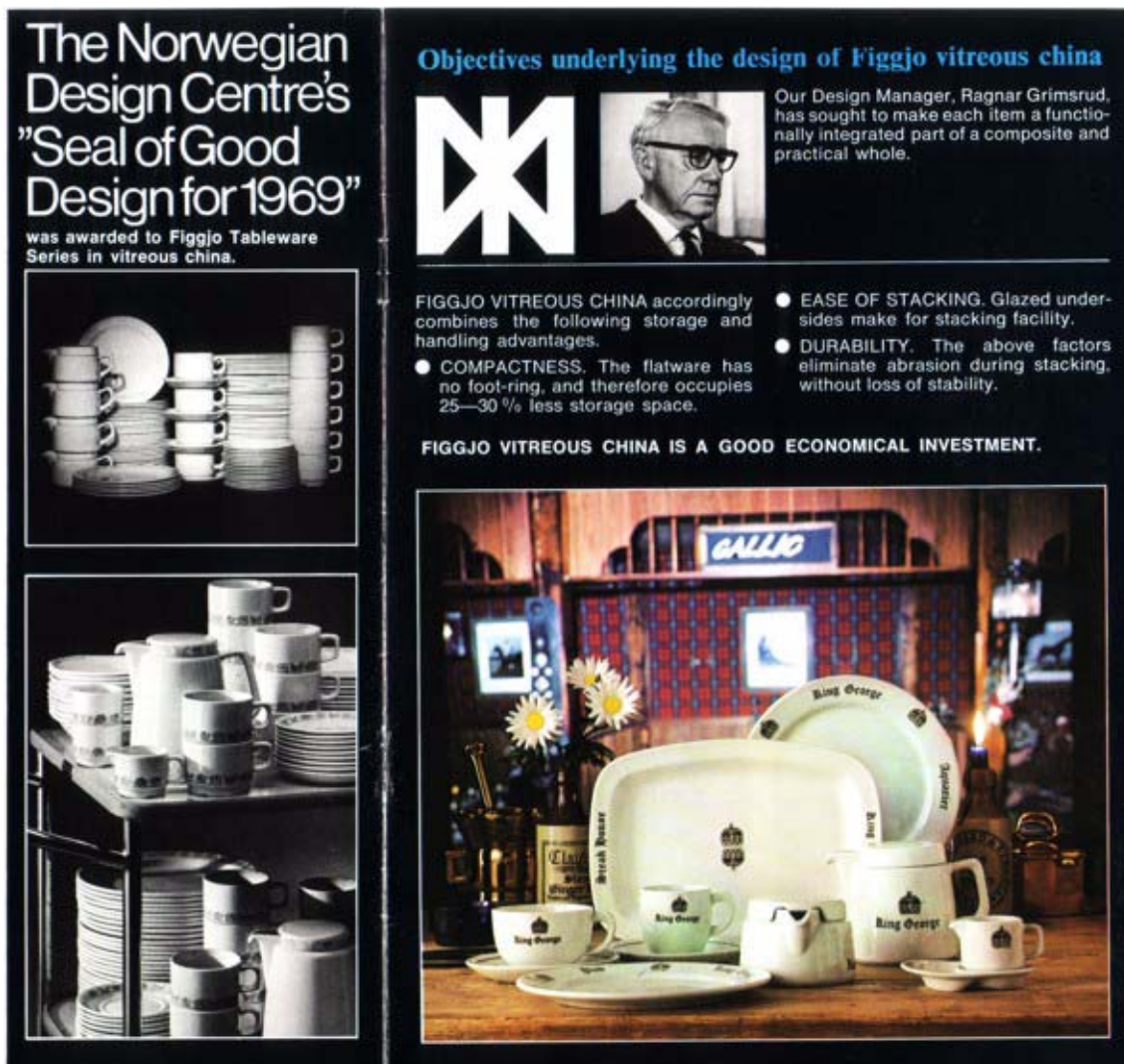


Figure 20–9: Brochure for the Figgjo 3500 series from ca 1970 where the product’s recent approval by the Norwegian Design Centre in the form of the Mark of Design Excellence is highlighted. (Although Figgjo here has translated “Merket for god design” into “Seal of Good Design”, it refers to the same award.) This brochure is also one of the first examples where Figgjo identified and used the name of the designer for marketing purposes. (Facsimile of brochure in Figgjo archive)

Spigerverk “Knipetak” temporary car tire grip aid designed by Egil Hyggen, a mountain spade from the same manufacturer and designer, the Hordaland Mek. Verksted *Nokke 1800* timber winch designed by Paul Sønnesyn and Gunnar Bryn, the Jo-Bu Mek. Verksted *Jobu L-6* chain saw, a A/S Panco chemical toilet, the Polaris 2535 anchor and the A/S Ski-Produkter *Smekk* ski binding designed by Nils Eie.⁴⁷ As we have seen, the applied art community had serious trouble coping with a field and concept of design that included such products. *Bonytt* editor Arne Remlov expressed this attitude with utmost clarity when he wanted to delimit the term, field and concept of design to products

47. *Norsk Designcentrums Årsberetning 1969*, unpaginated (Norsk Designråd archive). More traditionally “industrial art” objects can of course also be found among the awarded products.



Figure 20–10: The silhouette of the Figgjo 3500 on the cover of the February 1974 issue of *Canadian Interiors*—as the epitome of “the new look in chinaware”.

designed by (aesthetically) trained designers in order to exclude all these engineering designs.⁴⁸ It should be clear by now, that receiving the Norwegian Design Centre's Mark of Design Excellence in the 1960s by no means implied being canonized by/in the applied art community. It should also be mentioned that the Mark of Design Excellence was no praise of "perfect" design, but rather a kind of hallmark of "good enough" design. This policy becomes evident in the jury's comment on the Figgjo 3500, as it is far from panegyric:

Simple and practical hotel service. The set of bowls with handles has its good formal basis, but lacks a clear relation to the other parts. Regarding the largest pot, its formal expression does not seem sufficiently coordinated with the two smaller versions. Due to their poor affinity with the rest of the series, the products serving dish, bowl -small and large, plus the stand for cream jug and sugar bowl left out of the evaluation.⁴⁹

It is interesting to note that, apart from the first, very short sentence, the entire comment from the jury is concerned exclusively with the (unsatisfactory) formal/aesthetic aspects of the design. This indicates that the primacy of the artistic aspects of design, which we have seen that the applied art community fought feverishly for as the perils of engineering design drew closer, still had its advocates also within the Norwegian Design Centre—otherwise a stronghold of the "problem solving" view on industrial design. Then again; with a typically artistically oriented designer like Arne Lindaas on the jury, this was hardly a surprise.

Still, with Roar Høyland—designer and lecturer at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS)—as chairman of the jury, a more balanced comment could perhaps have been expected.⁵⁰ As discussed above, Høyland had from the mid-1960s set himself off as one of the chief advocates of the contextual morality and responsibility of design. In this connection it is interesting to note that the jury comment on the Figgjo 3500 was issued at about the same time as Høyland hung a poster in the classroom at SHKS proclaiming to his students that "We have teacups enough!" ("Vi har tekopper nok!").⁵¹ It seems strange, then, that he did not find it opportune to make any remarks on the Figgjo 3500 besides the formal/aesthetic ones.

There are both structural as well as ideological reasons why Figgjo 3500 represented such a distinct break with the applied art tradition. As shown above, Figgjo spent vast resources on becoming a rational industrial company and building an identity and an image that distanced them from handicraft traditions and artistic activities. Add to that how Figgjo with the 3500 series addressed a market segment that was thought to be more

48. Arne Remlov, "Merker og priser for design" in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 20-21

49. *Norsk Designcentrums Årsberetning 1969*, unpagged (Norsk Designråd archive) ("Enkelt og praktisk hotellservice. Bollesettet med ører har sitt gode formmessige utgangspunkt, men mangler en klar smahørighet [sic] med de øvrige deler. Når det gjelder den største kannen, virker foruttrykket ikke tilstrekkelig samarbeidet med de to minste utgaver. På grunn av sin dårlige samhörighet med resten av serien er produktene serveringsfat, skål -liten og stor, samt understell for fløtemugge og sukkerkopp utelatt fra bedømmelse.")

50. The jury consisted of Roar Høyland (chairman), Sven Ivar Dysthe, Arne Lindaas, Gudmund Elvestad (deputy) and Kjell Richardsen (deputy): *Norsk Designcentrums Årsberetning 1969*, p 5 (Norsk Designråd archive)

51. Roar Høyland in conversation with the author, 28.03.2007

concerned with sense than sensibility, there was little to suggest a design process based on classic applied art ideals. The design ideology upon which the Figgjo 3500 is grounded can, somewhat roughly, be summarized in three concepts: scientific operationalism, rationalism and system philosophy.

How what may be called scientific operationalism was implemented in the product development of the 3500 series has been duly discussed above. Here, scientific operationalism signifies the idea that science can be operationalized, utilized or applied in a product development process. From this point of view, technology is understood as applied science. In the design of the 3500 series it was, as we have seen, especially the material technology, through the development of the vitreous china, which represented the most explicit version of scientific operationalism. But also more general processes, such as Figgjo's energetic efforts in the names of Henry Ford and Frederic Taylor throughout the 1950s must be understood as a kind of scientific operationalism.

Rationalism was reflected e.g. in the fact that the entire 3500 concept is designed based on parameters such as space saving, stackability, economy of use, flexibility and manufacturability. The design specification was developed based on the belief that all aspects of the situation of use, every need, requirement and function could be mapped and analysed and in turn comprise a rational basis for the design process. Those aspects of the design process encompassing formal creativity, aesthetics and art-related expression/communication were in other words gravely understated. How much of and to what degree this understatement was genuine or fictitious/rhetoric is of course hard to estimate. But its mere existence signifies a distinct break with the applied art tradition, where formal creativity, aesthetics and art-related expression/communication were becoming more and more central and explicit aspects of the design process.

The third and perhaps most evident aspect of the design ideology upon which the Figgjo 3500 is grounded can be described as system philosophy. The 3500 concept is quite consistently based on system theories, i.e. that the individual items are designed as modules, elements and components of a paramount system rather than complete, autonomous entities in their own right. This mode of thought also denotes a distinct break with the applied art tradition, which to a considerable degree hailed the autonomous formal qualities of singular objects. The 3500 series is based on a product group identity, or system identity, rather than an autonomous object identity—although the jury for the Mark of Design Excellence found some of the product items' group identity to be insufficiently pronounced.⁵² An item in the 3500 series is not a sculpture, but a building block.

20.5 Scientific operationalism by social osmosis?

When discussing a design ideology that is based on these three concepts; scientific operationalism, rationalism and system philosophy—especially around 1960—it is hard

52. *Norsk Designcentrums Årsberetning 1969*, unpagged (Norsk Designråd archive)

to avoid allusions to the Hochschule für Gestaltung (HfG) Ulm—a German school of design operative from 1953 to 1968. The HfG Ulm was undoubtedly one of the most influential incubators for international design ideology in the 1950s and 1960s, and was noted for its intense and consistent focus on precisely such concepts as scientific operationalism, rationalism and system philosophy.⁵³ The HfG Ulm was and is in popular wordings often referred to as the heir to the Bauhaus, much due to Walter Gropius' affiliation with the establishment of the HfG Ulm—his delivering inauguration speech in 1955 was a symbolic act in this respect.

Although such a notion might have some degree of legitimacy to it, the two decades which had passed between the closing of the Bauhaus and the opening of the HfG Ulm had by no means gone unnoticed. The school's first director, the Swiss artist and architect Max Bill was himself a Bauhaus alumnus, and invited several former Bauhaus teachers to HfG Ulm. But even Bill realized that the possibilities and duties of the design fields had changed quite drastically from the 1920s to the 1950s—perhaps especially in terms of the radical developments in industrial manufacture and the onset of the consumer society. But despite the fact that Bill promoted unadorned, non-expressionist, neutral form, often inspired by and based on science, rationality and logic, he was nevertheless soon criticised of displaying an aestheticising attitude towards design. A fraction among his colleagues headed by the director-to-be Tomás Maldonado, an Argentinian artist and design theoretician, accused Bill's view of design of being far too art-analogous and romanticizing.

This fraction wanted to elude the romantic idealism and sought to develop a more scientific conception of design. Maldonado insisted that “industrial design is not an art”, and thus implied that it was not artistic creativity, but rather completely different factors which fostered good design.⁵⁴ The designer was not to be an artist, but a coordinator who collaborated closely with the substantial number of specialists involved in modern industrial manufacture. The core values were to be productivity, effectiveness and use value—not aesthetics.⁵⁵ The role of the designer, then, was to resemble more that of the engineer than that of the artist, and not until after having completed a broad spectre of training in technology and science would the designer be capable of doing design in practice—which Maldonado called precisely *scientific operationalism*.⁵⁶

53. See e.g.: René Spitz, *hfg ulm—The View behind the Foreground—The Political History of the Ulm School of Design 1953-1968* (Stuttgart/London: Edition Axel Menges, 2002) and Paul Betts, “Science, Semiotics and Society: The Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung in Retrospect” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1998, p 67-82

54. Tomás Maldonado, “New Developments in Industry and the Training of Designers” in *Architects' Yearbook*, Vol. 9, 1960, p 176

55. The Italian designer and theoretician Andrea Branzi—who according to himself spent much of his younger years polemicising against this institution, using it as “a negative parameter to indicate everything that we wished to rid design of”—has later described the central theorem of HfG Ulm in the 1960s as: “Going beyond the limits of the industrial application of art, Ulm... proposed... an essential cooling of the object itself, a neutralization of its expressive qualities within a formal code of great purity and correctness, but one that curbed its visual intrusiveness, its mechanical arrogance. This subtle, humanistic policy was intended to rescue man from the industrial object, transforming it into a grey instrument enclosed in its own abstract perfection.” However, Branzi rushes to point out that the design methodology developed at HfG Ulm “has always been erroneously presented and understood as absolutely rational and scientific” and describes it as “a grand, metaphysical vision of the industrial object” and a sort of “technological theosophy”: Andrea Branzi, *Learning From Milan—Design and the Second Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988) p 40-42

It is important to note, though, that this focus on science, technology and industry did not imply a liberal capitalist/corporate attitude towards design—quite the contrary: As the American design historian Paul Betts has argued; “the primacy of scientific rationality... was embraced as a needed defence against the worrisome commercialization of postwar design.”⁵⁷ Founding design on principles of scientific rationality became a way out of what at HfG Ulm was seen as an increasingly troublesome tension between industrial capital and industrial manufacture without relapsing into cultural elitism. For instance, semiotics could be a remedy against market research.⁵⁸ This particular ethic, and the development towards an ever higher level of abstraction of the scientific foundation, is essential in understanding how the institution’s design theory became less and less compatible with ordinary industrial design practice. The situation came to a grinding halt in 1968, and the school closed.

A curious, fascinating and utterly tangible connection between the HfG Ulm and the Figgjo 3500 is the conspicuous resemblance between the latter and an already mentioned product: the Rosenthal/Thomas *TC 100* designed by Hans Roericht. This service, which the German manufacturer launched in 1961, was originally conceived as Roericht’s thesis project as HfG Ulm. The thesis consisted of a report and a prototype for a service intended for commercial kitchens and institutional households, developed and designed in accordance with all the required market, manufacture and usage analyses, requirement specification, concept development, etc. based on the scientific principles and rationalist methods prescribed by the HfG Ulm. This process resulted in a design that bears remarkable resemblance to Figgjo 3500—if not in every aspect of the detailing, then surely in programme and concept. One example is the distinctive double cylinder principle that is an essential feature of the design of both the two services’ cups. Many more resemblances could be listed, but one crucial *difference* should also be mentioned: Rosenthal/Thomas *TC 100* was designed for and produced in an existing and traditional porcelain quality familiar to the manufacturer, whereas the Figgjo 3500, as we have seen, was made from a custom-made material—the vitreous china.

What is most interesting about the similar design of these two products is that any speculation in terms of plagiarism can be dismissed simply because they are too contemporary. Figgjo 3500 was put on the market just a few months after Rosenthal/Thomas *TC 100* entered production, and the German service was presented as a novelty in *Bonytt* only after the Norwegian product had been launched [Figure 20-11]. As mentioned above, Figgjo initiated the development of the vitreous china and their preparation for their contribution to the professional market already in 1959. Furthermore, design manager Ragnar Grimsrud stated in 1959 that it took two years to design a new earthenware service—the design process was certainly not shorter when it came to a product involving a completely new material, as well as a completely new

56. Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A cultural history of West German industrial design* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: California University Press, 2004) p 149-156

57. Paul Betts, “Science, Semiotics and Society: The Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung in Retrospect” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1998, p 71

58. Betts, *op.cit.* p 79-80

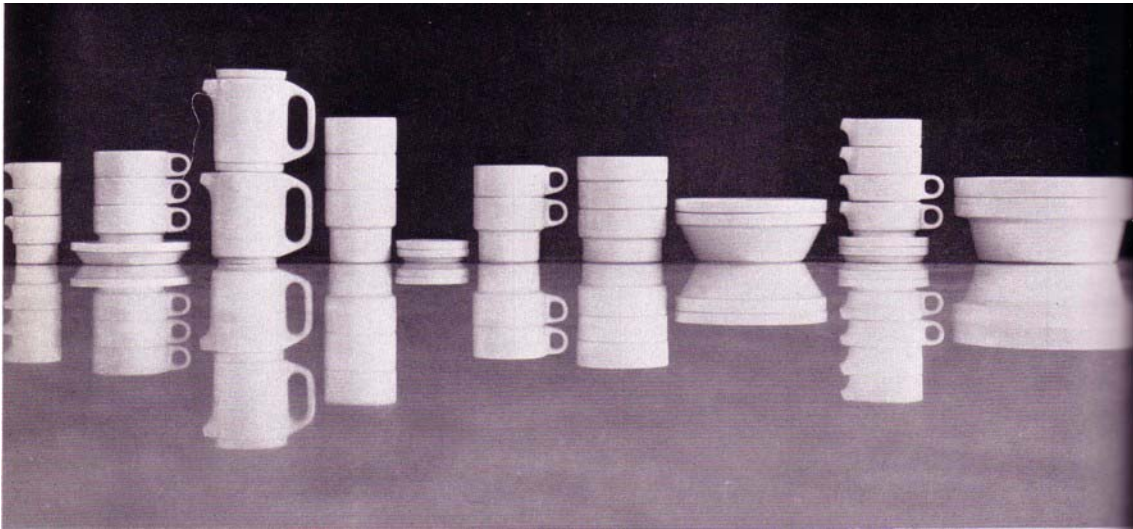


Figure 20–11: Illustration from the 1962 *Bonytt* presentation of the hotel service *TC100* (Porcelain) Rosenthal/Thomas, 1961. Designer: Hans Roericht. (Photo from *Bonytt*, Vol. 22, 1962)

market segment.⁵⁹ It is thus highly implausible that the Rosenthal/Thomas *TC 100* in any way could have had any influence on the design of the Figgjo 3500.⁶⁰

On the institutional, personal and ideological level there are a few, interesting connections between HfG Ulm and the Norwegian design community. To start with the beginning, it may be noted that Norwegian financial aid was a crucial element in the establishment of the HfG Ulm. This came about in the form of a contribution of ca. DM 200.000 from the Norwegian Aid for Europe (Europahjelpen) in 1950 to the Geschwister-Scholl-Stiftung (headed by Inge Scholl), the foundation which at that time was working to set up an institution of higher education based on a radical social reform programme—an initiative which were to result in the establishment of the HfG Ulm in 1953. Inge Scholl first got in contact with the Norwegian Aid for Europe through a meeting with the organization’s representative in Germany, Arne Torgersen, in 1949.⁶¹

The Norwegian Aid for Europe (Europahjelpen) was founded (1946) and headed by Odd Nansen, son of the famous scientist, polar explorer, diplomat and philanthropist Fridtjof Nansen.⁶² During World War II, Odd Nansen was imprisoned, first at Grini in

59. Ragnar Grimsrud interviewed in Harriet Clayhills, “Gammelt og nytt i Stavanger” in *Bonytt* Vol. 19, 1959, p 18

60. There is one perhaps possible but improbable rendezvous: the *XII Triennale di Milano* in 1960. The HfG Ulm was represented with its own stand there, but I have not been able to find out whether or not Hans Roericht’s prototype for the *TC100* was exhibited there. Since it was a good, representative and recent (1959) thesis, it may have been. But then again; since it had been picked up for commercial production by Rosenthal/Thomas, it is also very likely that the prototype was not shown. As we have seen, Figgjo products were chosen for the Norwegian exhibition at the *XII Triennale*, but I have found no indication that Ragnar Grimsrud or any Figgjo representative visited the show (or any of the other *Triennali* for that matter). Such an hypothesis of contact/influence thus seems highly implausible. In this connection it is also interesting to note that Odd Brochmann did not mention neither HfG Ulm nor Germany in his comprehensive *Bonytt* review of the *XII Triennale*, whereas the contributions from countries like Poland, Belgium and Austria were duly assessed: Odd Brochmann, “Den XII Triennale i Milano” in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 181-185

61. Spitz, *op.cit.* p 69-77. Torgersen later published his memoirs in German: Arne Torgersen, *Nach Ihnen, Herr General!—Humanitäre Abenteuer eines Norwegers im Nachkriegseuropa*. (Stuttgart: Ev. Vlg., 1971)

Norway, then in the German concentration camp Sachsenhausen, together with other prominent Norwegians such as later Minister of Foreign Affairs, Halvard Lange and the poet Arnulf Øverland. Odd Nansen was an architect by training, something that might have spurred his personal interest in Scholl's project.⁶³ He even served on the Geschwister-Scholl-Stiftung's Board of trustees from 1951 to 1968, alongside persons such as Walter Gropius, Henry van de Velde and Herbert Read.⁶⁴

A connection of a more professional nature is that the Norwegian architect and theoretician Christian Norberg-Schultz was a guest lecturer at HfG Ulm the autumn of 1957. He had taught at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) in Oslo from 1951 to 1956, lectured in architectural history at the University of Oslo in 1958-60, and was made professor at the National School of Architecture in Oslo (Statens Arkitektsskole i Oslo—SAO) in 1966—two years after he had earned his doctorate at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH).⁶⁵ The curious fact in this connection is that none of his articles for *Bonytt* in the years following his visit to HfG Ulm—neither before, during nor after he was on the editorial committee (1959-1961)—made any mention of the school, its ideas or pedagogics, or related design projects.⁶⁶ Nor did his contributions to the architectural magazine *Arkitektnytt* in this period, but in a 1958 article in the architectural magazine *Byggekunst* he presented the school according to his impressions. He slaughtered Max Bill's design of the school buildings and the ideas that underpinned it, but was very impressed with the students and Maldonado's scientific operationalism:

HfG denies that there is anything mysterious in the artistic process of creation and replace the intuitive and poeticizing with the exact analysis of problems and methods for their solution.⁶⁷

This indicates that Norberg-Schultz to some extent was taken by the ideology and pedagogics under development at HfG Ulm, but these impressions were not

62. The Norwegian Aid for Europe (Europahjelpen) recaptured the idea and spirit of the Nansen Aid For Refugees and Stateless Persons (Nansenhjelpen) which Odd Nansen had founded in 1936 in commemoration of his father. In 1953, the Norwegian Aid for Europe (Europahjelpen) was turned into the Norwegian Refugee Council (Det norske Flyktningeråd).

63. He graduated from the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH) in 1926. Worked as an assistant at the architectural office of Arnstein Arneberg in several shorter periods. Spent the years 1927 to 1930 in New York, working for two larger industrial corporations: Otto Delphin Amundsen (ed.), *Vi fra NTH—De neste ti kull: 1920-1929* (Oslo: Dreyer, 1950) p 103. As a curiosity, it might be mentioned that Odd Nansen was invited to write the preface to this commemorative publication presenting his generation of alumni from his *alma mater*.

64. Spitz, *op.cit.* p 100

65. Arne Gunnarsjaa, *Arkitekturleksikon* (Oslo: Abstrakt, 1999) p 549

66. The closest he got was a presentation of a newly designed playground in the city of Ulm, but not even here did he make any reference to HfG Ulm: Christian Norberg-Schultz, "De minstes verden" in *Bonytt* Vol. 20, 1960, p 54-56

67. Christian Norberg-Schultz, "Eksperiment i Ulm" in *Byggekunst* No. 3, 1958, p tillegget 11-12 ("HfG fornekter at det er noe mystisk i den kunstneriske skapelsesprosessen og erstatter det intuitive og diktende med eksakt analyse av problemstillinger og midler til deres løsning.") As a curiosity, it might be mentioned that Norberg-Schultz in the introduction refers to Inge Scholl and the financial backing she got from the USA to set up the school, but makes no mention of the decisive role played by Norwegian Aid for Europe (Europahjelpen), Arne Torgersen and Odd Nansen.

communicated in the magazine most widely read in the Norwegian design community, *Bonytt*, but in *Byggekunst*, an architectural magazine. This bias is enhanced by the fact that his teaching from this point on was directed only towards students of architecture (plus some students of art history), not industrial and interior designers. Just like Norberg-Schultz, none of his colleagues in *Bonytt* made any reference to HfG Ulm until Liv Schjødt did so in her 1962 presentation of the Rosenthal/Thomas *TC 100* service.⁶⁸ But she stuck strictly to the product at hand and did not provide much information about the school and its teachings—and nor did the only *Bonytt* article later in the decade (1966) to even mention the HfG Ulm.⁶⁹

A similar connection, but the other way around, was made some years later. The British graphic designer Anthony Froshaug, who was hired as a lecturer in typography in the department of visual communication at HfG Ulm in 1957, was a guest professor at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (Norges Tekniske Høgskole—NTH) in Trondheim from January to March 1960 where he got to know Norberg-Schultz' friend and colleague, architectural professor Arne Korsmo, quite well.⁷⁰ This is a fascinating curiosity *per se*, but could not have had any influence on the design of the Figgjo 3500, firstly because Froshaug was a graphic designer and could thus hardly have been the conveyor of the “Ulmian” aspects of the Figgjo 3500—i.e. scientific operationalism, rationalism and system philosophy in industrial design. Furthermore, the only known connection between Figgjo and the Norwegian Institute of Technology is laboratory head Arne Harris Johannessen, but he had studied chemical engineering—and thus probably never even set foot in the department of architecture—and had besides graduated long before Froshaug's stay in Trondheim.

A last point of connection is the only Norwegian student at HfG Ulm.⁷¹ This was the graphic designer Jan Gauguin, who studied at HfG Ulm from 1963 to 1966, before finishing his studies at the Royal College of Art in London.⁷² Gauguin later set up

68. Liv Schjødt, “Om begrensningens kunst” in *Bonytt* Vol. 22, 1962, p 132-133

69. Liv Schjødt, “Dette er PLUX” in *Bonytt* Vol. 26, 1966, p 216. For a 1967 presentation of new domestic AV equipment Roar Høyland picked i.a. a Braun tv set, but did not mention the company's and its design manager Dieter Rams' close collaboration with the HfG Ulm. The article also showed the 1956 Braun *Phonosuper SK4* designed by Rams and the head of HfG Ulm' department of product design, Hans Gugelot. Høyland still did not mention the HfG Ulm, only pointed out that the phonograph/radio had become a museum piece: Roar Høyland, “bo-nyttig” in *Bonytt* Vol. 27, 1967, p 257

70. Robin Kinross (ed.), *Anthony Froshaug—Documents of a Life* (London: Hyphen Press, 2000) p 9. Supplementary information provided by Sonja Johnsson in conversation with the author, 23.10.2004 at the seminar *Ulm, tysk designtradisjon og Skandinavien* organized by Nordisk forum for formgivningshistorie in Det danske Kunstindustrimuseum in Copenhagen. Sonja Johnsson and her husband, Swedish HfG Ulm student Gunnar Johnsson, lived in Froshaug's apartment in Ulm while he was in Trondheim. Information about the friendship between Froshaug and Arne Korsmo provided by the Norwegian HfG Ulm student Jan Gauguin in conversation with the author, 09.12.2005. Froshaug's father was Norwegian, something that might have influenced his decision to go. Another incentive may have been that he met Christian Norberg-Schultz in Ulm—they both arrived there in the fall of 1957. As a curiosity, it might be mentioned that Froshaug in a letter to his father-in-law wrote that “Of the other 14 new lecturers & professors, only one, a norwegian architect [Norberg-Schultz], has been offered better accommodation—he is to share the largest of the houses built for the faculty (the others are occupied) with a man who used to teach, but now does research, in industrial design here.”: Anthony Froshaug, letter to his father-in-law dated 30.11.1957, reprinted in Kinross (ed.), *op.cit.* p 158-160. Unfortunately Froshaug does not identify this industrial design researcher with whom Norberg-Schultz shared house in Ulm.

practice in Oslo, and began teaching communication design at the Department of Industrial Design (Institutt for industridesign) at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) in 1984.⁷³ Since he went to HfG Ulm only after both the Rosenthal/Thomas *TC 100* the Figgjo *3500* had been launched, he could of course not have contributed in any way to the remarkable resemblance between these two products.

This leaves us with only one plausible information channel; the possibility that some of the actors in the Norwegian design community subscribed to the *Ulm* journal published by the HfG Ulm from October 1958. It is perhaps plausible, although not very likely, that some of the more ideologically progressive members of this community, e.g. central figures in the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) did so,⁷⁴ but Ragnar Grimsrud most certainly did not. And since Figgjo and Grimsrud had virtually no connection with ID-gruppen, this hypothesis also seems unlikely.

Hence there is not much to support the assumption that the ideology, curriculum and pedagogics of the HfG Ulm were well-known in the management and product development department of a modest, pragmatically oriented Norwegian provincial company. One can of course not rule out every possibility of the HfG Ulm ideas having reached Figgjo and Grimsrud around 1960, but the fact that Figgjo at this time was substantially expanding their export activity—also in Germany—is just as probable an explanation for this as the ones explored above.⁷⁵ In conclusion, I find it safe to say that the Figgjo *3500* is an excellent example that it is possible for conspicuously “Ulmian” ideas to develop independently from and unaffected by the HfG itself. In the end, however, the most intriguing trait of the Figgjo *3500* series is perhaps its remarkable longevity and perseverance. The product is still in production today, and has been the pillar of Figgjo’s existence for almost half a century.⁷⁶

71. This fact is derived from a wall chart based on HfG Ulm statistics and displayed at the exhibition *birth of the cool—Bauhausarven, Ulm-designskolen & dansk produktdesign* shown at Det danske Kunstindustrimuseum in Copenhagen from 08.10.2004 to 09.01.2005. The wall chart only listed the number of students pr. nationality. I am grateful to Jan Michl for identifying the person behind this “Norway: 1” for me as Jan Gauguin. (When Gauguin later took up teaching, he became Michl’s colleague.)

72. Jan Gauguin in conversation with the author, 09.12.2005

73. The department was moved from SHKS to the Oslo School of Architecture (Arkitektthøgskolen i Oslo—AHO) in 1996.

74. Thorbjørn Rygh, co-founder and president of ID-gruppen, did not subscribe to or read *Ulm*, and nor did—to his recollection—any of his colleagues: Thorbjørn Rygh in conversation with the author, 19.12.2005

75. As part of their strategy of increasing exports, Figgjo was e.g. present at the Frankfurt industries fair in 1960 (and one in Blackpool): N.N., “Våre keramikfabrikker har betydelig eksport til England” in *Rogalands Avis*, 14.09.1960

76. In 1991, Figgjo’s managing director at that time, Hallvard Ween, stated that the *3500* series constituted about half of the company’s turnover and had done so ever since the introduction three decades earlier: Stranger, *op.cit.* p 39. The production volume of the *3500* series has remained stable ever since and is still the single most important model series, but because Figgjo since the mid 1990s have introduced several new, successful series resulting in a substantial increase in the company’s turnover, the *3500* series now accounts for about 10% of the total turnover. Information provided by sales manager Elisabeth Saupstad in conversation with the author, 01.12.2005.

20.6 Conclusion

This chapter has been a comprehensive analysis of the Figgjo *3500 Hotel China* series. As their entry into a market and product segment that would become Figgjo's very lifeline, this product in vitreous china designed and developed especially for the professional market mark a turning point in the company's history.

After an introductory note on how the hotel china series' concept and identity contrasted sharply with all Figgjo products thus far and a brief survey of the basis for the product's market potential, we began scrutinising the material morals that permeated the initial inscription of the *3500* as science incarnated. However, with the passing of time and resonating general societal changes, this image underwent an extreme makeover. Trends tamed technology, and the *engineered* tableware became the *fashioned* tableware. Focus then turned to the ideals, concepts and programmes underpinning the design of the product, demonstrating how *3500 Hotel China* series represents a clear break with the prevalent design ideology within the applied art community at the time. This was perhaps Figgjo's most pronounced, comprehensive and important way of *clearing the table*, as it heralded a new course for the company.

On the whole, this chapter set out to analyse the product development process in a broader perspective than customary, considering aspects ranging from political frameworks and business strategies via material/production technology and design ideology/methodology to marketing, consumption and redesign. In doing so, this specific story demonstrates perhaps more clearly than ever one of the major overall assertions of this study: how the meaning of design is never obvious and stable, but always under negotiation and transformation.

This chapter concludes this study's analysis of Figgjo's various strategies for *clearing the table*, its discussion on *reconfiguring design cultures*, as well as the overall investigation of the domestication of ideology in mid-twentieth century Norwegian industrial design.

Conclusion: Reconfiguring Design Cultures

The Norwegian historian Francis Sejersted has identified 1970 as the time when modernity became troublesome.¹ This was no sudden turn of events, and Sejersted's concern is political history, but the development discussed in this chapter indicates that his assertion is valid also within the realm of design history.

The postwar era of great political concord was drawing to an end in the 1960s. Norway entered the 1960s with a Labour party (Arbeiderpartiet) majority government. When this turbulent decade ended, the political landscape was severely radicalized and polarized, with a heated EEC debate, Cabinet crisis and the oil crisis waiting around the bend. Still, it was the 1960s which saw the full development of the welfare state. Whereas the 1950s are normally portrayed as the age of the economic wonder, it is the subsequent decade which in Norway has been dubbed the “golden sixties”—both due to the expansion of the social services, but also because of the massive industrial development and public spending and subsequent increase in household economy, living standard and private spending. The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) membership meant both improved export possibilities for Norwegian industry as well as harder competition on the domestic market, resulting in close-downs, take-overs, mergers, rationalization, and restructuring of many Norwegian companies.

The 1960s saw the onset of the consumer society, with the proliferation of the private car, the television, holidays, etc. But not before had the consumer society become a reality for large parts of the population, was it derogatorily renamed the affluent society by sceptics and critics. Was increased private consumption making people any happier? How about the alienating effects of urbanization and industrialization? What of our responsibility towards the environment and natural resources? Typically enough though, most of this criticism did not come from working class heroes who had laboured and toiled in order to buy the family's first washing machine or car, but from more privileged members of the society. Historians are always faced with the problems of continuity versus rupture, and it is seldom wise to be too categorical in such matters. The late 1960s, and especially the student uprisings in the spring of 1968, are often portrayed as a great schism. However, the developments discussed here call for a more cautious position, as the new and at times genuinely radical attitudes that surfaced hardly can be said to have constituted a revolution. Looking back at the “rebel yell” it is tempting to agree with the Swedish novelist Klas Östergren's sardonic remark: “The monument, May 1968, stands there like an overrated carnival that disappoints history's tourists”.²

As we have seen above, the task of propagandising Norwegian design internationally was given great attention and effort in the 1950s. The lingering desire for international fame was catalysed by the new and improved export possibilities opened up by the EFTA membership. Nonetheless, the design community still left the commercial propagandising of Norwegian design internationally to the industry itself, and continued

1. Francis Sejersted, *Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder—Norge og Sverige i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Pax, 2005) p 361-362

2. Klas Östergren, *Gentlemen* [1980] (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1982) p 246 (“Monumentet, mai 1968, står der som et overvurdert karneval som skuffer historiens turister”)

to focus on the cultural scene. Even though the great international propaganda events of the 1950s lost some of their remarkable prominence in the decade to come, they still played a significant role in the autopoiesis of the Norwegian design community in the 1960s.

The foundation of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in 1955 marked the acknowledgment of a distinct professional identity for industrial designers and a gradually emerging challenge to the holistic approach represented by the movement, term and profession associated with *applied art* (*brukskunst*). In the 1960s, this identification of industrial design was continued and intensified. Among the most symbolic events in this process were the first grand exhibition devoted entirely to industrial design staged at the Oslo Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo) in 1963 and the opening of the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum) in 1965. That both the Norwegian Export Council (Norges Eksportråd) and the Federation of Norwegian Industries (Norges Industriforbund) were involved in the organization of these events is indicative of the direction this discourse was taking.

Whereas the industrial designers manoeuvred towards new design tasks, moving into domains previously dominated by engineers and seeking greater influence and acceptance in the world of commerce, industry and business, the studio craftsmen were moving in the opposite direction. Aesthetic expression, artistic quality, formal originality and material effects became more and more important aspects of their work while topics such as utilitarian functions, dissemination, manufacturability, etc. were quickly downgraded.

Holding the universalist applied art community together, then, became an increasingly difficult task. The most frequently applied strategy in the struggle to create a common ground was the insistence that all types of design activity—from the most art-like studio handicraft to the most engineering-like industrial design—contained artistic aspects at their core. But as the decade proceeded, it became harder and harder to decide on what was to be considered design. The industrial designers happily included engineers into their midst, although even the most progressive “problem solvers” maintained the essentiality of the aesthetic aspects of their activity. The traditional applied art community on the other hand struggled to maintain an art-like definition of design in order to exclude practitioners and products that did not have an explicit and essential aesthetic intention.

These developments included the organizational level as well. In 1963, the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere) was founded as a trade union to promote the ethical, legal and economic interests, as well the professional quality and recognition of the trade. In 1965, the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) was reorganized and become an umbrella organization for the Norwegian Applied Artists (Norske Brukskunstnere), the Norwegian Organization of Interior Architects (Norske Interiørarkitekters Landsforening), the Norwegian Association of Architects (Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund—NAL) and the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)).³ The reorganization of the National

Federation must be understood in light of the professional fragmentation process of the design field it represented a strategy from the established applied art community to maintain order and discipline in the community and preserve their holistic/universalist convictions which were facing quite a crossfire.

The criticism of the consumer society also surfaced within the realm of the design discourse. Critics asserted that the designers were self-asserting, egocentric and cunning opportunists, turning everything they laid their hands on into ephemeral fashion products, while at the same time being utterly servile to and uncritical of the manufacturers' immoral and irresponsible perpetual novelty pursuit. One could speak of a campaign for genuineness and naturalness, a concern for the contextual morality and responsibility of design. Environmentalists and social reformers also started to scorn design and designers for immorality and irresponsibility. Design should serve Man and facilitate life, not create imposing objects of desire. Designers should help solve "real" problems in developing countries—not design yet another teacup.

Also in terms of ideology mediation the time around 1970 marked the end of an era. In 1968, *Bonytt* changed name to *nye bonytt* and in the course of three years the magazine and its editorial policy was drastically transformed. Perhaps the best indication is how the description of the magazine's scope changed from "interior design, architecture, art, applied art and industrial design" to "house, home and interior design".⁴ The publication was de-ideologized as the agreement making it the official organ for the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) was terminated after 23 years. After three decades, the magazine was transformed from an arena for fervent advocacy, professional debate and mediation and negotiation of ideology to a forum for inspiration and friendly advice concerning interior decoration.

Running a manufacturing industry company in Norway in the 1960s was a whole other ballpark compared to doing so the previous decade. And needless to say, the altered terms and conditions for the manufacturing industry also greatly affected the field of industrial design. The breakthrough of international free trade, the advance of the welfare state, the boost in private consumption and the proliferation of popular culture changed the scene completely, and required a fundamental restructuring not only of the manufacturing industry, but consequently also of the design field. The EFTA membership of 1960, the freelisting of the private car the same year and the first official TV broadcast in 1961 thus become symbols of the watershed marking the onset of a modern international consumer society in Norway. This chapter has charted the design strategies and practice constructed by Figgjo Fajanse in their effort to adapt to this new world.

In the early 1960s, the company took some drastic measures aimed at rationalization of both their production processes and their products, all in the name of improved competitiveness in the new international consumer society. The production was made more efficient and rational through fewer models and larger series/runs, and increased

3. Other types of organizations were members too, but the trade unions were the *raison d'être* of the National Federation.

4. *nye bonytt* No. 11/12, 1968, p 13 ("boliginnredning, arkitektur, kunst, brukskunst og industrial design") and *nye bonytt* No. 3, 1971, p 46 ("hus, hjem og boliginnredning")

export efforts were to make up for any loss of sales resulting from the reduced product portfolio. Still, this was not enough. In facing an international market, Figgjo—like most Norwegian manufacturing industry companies—became a minuscule actor. Facing the challenges posed by this situation, the 1960s became a period of gradual rapprochement and negotiations between the four actors in the Norwegian ceramic tableware industry. What began with coordinated export efforts ended with mergers. Despite these dramatic structural challenges, Figgjo managed to survive and established some profitable market segments by way of a more specialised design strategy and product portfolio.

Key factors in this process were an intensified preoccupation with rational production and a strategy favouring distinctive and attractive design. In the new world of free trade, Figgjo realized that they could not be biggest or cheapest. Still, as Figgjo had to navigate in a landscape between Fordist principles of rational manufacture and an increasingly erratic and hedonistic consumer market, the reduced and renewed product portfolio is best understood as an attempt at developing a new basis for a more rational product differentiation. Figgjo's solution, then, was to tone down the product design, making the modern designs of their new and few service models more harmless or "tame" by letting the more versatile and expressive decor design to the fore.

The trajectory that more than anything symbolizes Figgjo's readjustment in the 1960s, though, is the development of the *3500 Hotel China* series. Moving into a completely new market segment with a completely new product type made of a completely new material and designed according to completely new ideas turned out to be probably the most decisive event in the company's history. But the discussion of this project also allowed for an in-depth analysis of the design process in a broader perspective, considering aspects ranging from political frameworks, business management, market strategies, material technology, design ideology and methodology, production technology, advertisement, acculturation, consumer response and redesign. These negotiations on technology, design, identity and consumption tell the story of how an artefact is constantly in a state of transformation—on both sides of the factory gate. By undertaking such a "cultural life cycle analysis" of this product, I have sought to examine the dynamics of design historical change.

As discussed earlier, the 1960s' growing social criticism, political radicalism and environmental awareness did not pass the discourse on design ideology by. In short we might say that the decade saw an increased concern for the contextual morality and responsibility of design. The most emblematic event in this respect can be said to have been when the designer and lecturer Roar Høyland hung a poster in his classroom at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens håndverk- og kunstindustriskole—SHKS) that said "We have teacups enough!" ("Vi har tekopper nok!").⁵ How, then, did Figgjo relate to these rather radical shifts in design ideology? Given Figgjo's *raison d'être*, it is tempting to say that they begged to differ. Both as citizens and as professionals Grimsrud and his colleagues might very well have agreed with Høyland that design could be more than making another teacup. However, as opposed to the

5. Roar Høyland in conversation with the author, 28.03.2007

design school lecturer Høyland, Figgjo's designers, managers, owners and 465 employees earned their living making more teacups.⁶

This does not mean that the Figgjo designers did not respond to radical ideas of their time. Turid Gramstad Oliver, for instance, got increasingly interested in feminism and cultural radicalism throughout the 1960s, but did not consider these impulses particularly relevant to her activity as a designer—at least not in any direct or conscious way.⁷ But, as both she and her colleagues Rolf Frøyland and Jørg Løve Nielsen assert, the company management—with the partial, but in this respect seldom decisive exception of Ragnar Grimsrud—made it clear that they had little or no interest in aspects of design that did not directly relate to manufacturability or salability.⁸ In other words, it was slim pickings for radical design ideology.

The fact that the social criticism and political radicalism emerging in the discourse on design ideology at the end of the 1960s found such barren land in the industry (i.e. also in design practice) must be understood in light of the fundamental structures of a market economy: it is very hard to surpass profit maximisation as the prime mover of commercial industrial design. As long as there is a perceived market for a new teacup, there will be a manufacturer and a designer procuring a new teacup.⁹ As the American historian of engineering design Henry Petroski put it: “Luxury, rather than necessity, is the mother of invention.”¹⁰ And in fact—many a teacup has been designed and manufactured in Norway since Roar Høyland declared their redundancy in 1968.

As the American historian Thomas P. Hughes has shown, large sociotechnological constructions tend to acquire a momentum so that challenging them becomes an increasingly difficult task.¹¹ This is, I believe, a key to understanding why radical idealism—despite altruistic aims, obvious importunity and sound reasoning—so often fails to impact conservative practice. In this respect, the situation in industrial design here described greatly resembles the discourse on car usage around 1970—the time

6. The newly merged company Figgjo Fajanse—Stavangerflint A/S had 465 employees in 1968: Ulf-E. Rosenberg, “Elsker, elsker ikke” in Ulf-E. Rosenberg (ed.), *Figgjo—Formet av entusiasme gjennom 60 år, 1941-2001* (Figgjo: Figgjo AS, 2001) p 54

7. Turid Gramstad Oliver in conversation with the author, 03.03.2006

8. *Ibid.*, Rolf Frøyland in conversation with the author, 02.03.2006 and Jørg Løve Nielsen in conversation with the author, 01.03.2006

9. This does not mean, however, that designers are merely impotent servants of the Market and incapable of instigating change. As the Australian design historian and theoretician Tony Fry has put it: “Of course many designers are subordinated to domination of the social relations of capitalist production—but—this does not mean they cannot ‘make their own history’ out of resistance to their circumstances, be they not of their own choosing. It seems to me as important to recognise designers, as personal agents, as not being totally determined by capital, as it is equally important not to mistakenly assume them to be ‘free agents.’”: Tony Fry, “Design History: A Debate?” in *Block* No. 5, 1981, p 17. A similar point has been made by the British art and design historian John A. Walker: “When emphasizing the social nature of human beings there is a danger of giving the impression that ‘the social’ is a kind of straitjacket, when of course what limits also enables... [C]onsequently it would be wrong to present designers as either completely free agents or as robots whose actions are totally determined by external powers.”: John A. Walker, *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989) p 51

10. Henry Petroski, *The Evolution of Useful Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) p 22

11. Thomas P. Hughes, “The Evolution of Large Technological Systems” in Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes and Trevor Pinch (eds.), *The Social Construction of Technological Systems* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987) p 51-82, esp. 76-80 and Thomas P. Hughes, *Networks of Power—Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983)

when, as the German sociologist of technology Wolfgang Sachs has observed, the world fell out of love with the automobile.¹² In explaining why the many loud voices arguing against private motoring failed to instigate profound change, the Norwegian historian Per Østby asserts that “[t]he movements of the 1970s were too small, too peripheral and had too radical solutions to enrol the broader public.”¹³ In the case of radical change by design, it would primarily have had to be the industry and its managers that had to be enrolled. In the climate of Norwegian industry and commerce around 1970, it seems as though the only plausible way for Roar Høyland and others advocating a “design for the real world” to move from ideology to practice would have been to convince the industry that there was money to be made in saving the world by design. As far as I have been able to find out, this argument was never made.

Hence we are taken back to the intriguing tensions between ideology and pragmatism, between theory and practice. As the American historian William Sewell Jr. has argued; culture is most fruitfully conceptualized as a dialectic between theory/system and practice, and the tension between the two is not only necessary, but in fact the very key to understanding cultural transformation and development.¹⁴ This is why the cultural history of design is best understood as a dialectic between ideology and practice.

-
12. Wolfgang Sachs, *For Love of the Automobile—Looking Back into the History of Our Desires* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992) p 173-182
 13. Per Østby, *A Steel Phoenix?—The Social Construction of a Modern Car* [STS Working Paper No. 4/91] (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 1991) p 3. It was, however, not just in areas such as industrial design, private motoring and consumption that radical ideologies fell short faced with relatively well-functioning large systems and macrostructures—there are interesting parallels with and relations to the political scene. For novelist accounts of the paradoxical and at times seemingly absurd effort of campaigning for armed revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat in one of the most democratic nations, most affluent societies and advanced welfare states in the world—all of which Norway unquestionably was around 1970—see: Dag Solstad, *Arild Asnes, 1970* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1971) and Dag Solstad, *Gymnaslærer Pedersens beretning om den store politiske vekkelsen som har hjemsoøkt vårt land* (Oslo, Oktober, 1982)
 14. William Sewell Jr., “The Concept(s) of Culture” in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999) p 47

Part VI:

Summary and conclusions

21 Summary and conclusions

21.1 Introduction

This study has been an attempt at writing design history understood as an investigation of the cultural significance of quotidian artefacts and the ideas that shaped them. It is based on the tenet that the design of artefacts ordinary people surround themselves with in their everyday lives provides a highly rewarding entry to material culture. In the context of a modern industrialised society, where the vast majority of such objects are mundane, mass-produced, industrially manufactured goods, this calls for an industrial design history that recognises the extraordinary significance of the ordinary.

As a recapitulation, this chapter offers a summary of the major findings and some conclusions that can be drawn from these. The first part of this chapter will revisit some of the theoretical perspectives that were discussed in Part II in light of the findings from the empirical material. A full and detailed reassessment would be to overdo it, but some of the most pertinent issues both from the epistemological, historiographical, theoretical and methodological discussions merit resumed reflection. The bulk of the chapter, though, consists of a summary of the empirical study, trying to excerpt the major findings. It retraces how *the domestication of industrial design culture in Norway, ca. 1940-1970*, can be tracked through the settings identified as *constructing design discourse, negotiating design networks* and *reconfiguring design cultures*. The chapter is then brought to a close with some concluding remarks on how we have seen *modern transformed*.

21.2 Theoretical perspectives revisited

As a period in time, the mid-twentieth century is particularly interesting because the dynamics of historical change become quite dramatic and distinct. In the course of a few decades, the grand project of modernity went from being at its peak to becoming troublesome. The momentum of modernism went from critical mass to mass criticism. The period is thus well-suited for studying the transformations of modernism and modernist design ideals. However, studying the history of modern design poses many terminological and conceptual challenges. Some of the complexity and problems pertaining to the study of modernism were explored in Chapter 2. This discussion was far from exhaustive or conclusive, and probably raised more questions than it answered. Still, as an exercise in reflexive investigation in the form of a historical sociology of concept formation, the endeavour was required in order to prepare the ground for the ensuing research.

The introductory discussion on modernism or modernisms led to the assertion of the basic premise that the various guises of modernism in design can be seen as cultural modes. One of the principal ambitions of this study has been to demonstrate that design, as a cultural mode, is best conceptualised as a dialectic between ideology and practice. In light of the empirical material analysed above, there is little to suggest that such a claim is faulty. Ideology and practice are complementary concepts: The cultural meaning of design practice presupposes its situation in some sort of systematically structured relation—its situation in design ideology. But at the same time, design practice forms and transforms design ideology. The design ideology negotiated in the Norwegian design community and discussed and mediated in *Bonytt* and the design practice negotiated and performed at Figgjo constitute precisely such an indissoluble duality or dialectic, allowing for a dynamic understanding of historical change.

Our investigation of how the ideas and practices of modern design in mid-twentieth century Norway underwent continuous transformation certainly has demonstrated the plurality of modernisms. Modernism, like allisms and any socio-cultural phenomenon, change according to time and space. The close reading of the design discourse offered here has revealed the dialectic and dynamic character of historical change, thus making a bid for a more nuanced design history. Another side to the plurality of modernisms evidenced by this study is the remarkable diversity both of ideological positions and of practice existing simultaneously within the same community. These findings lend currency to the notion of the differential paradigmatic system discussed in Chapter 2. We have encountered design as a variety of cultural modes expressed as a set of partly overlapping, factually adequate, but mutually inconsistent modernisms that combined seem to comprise a multi-paradigmatic state. However, it is crucial to recognise the complex, overlapping, contesting and supplementary character of the terms, concepts and categories of analytic distinction. The richness and complexity of the empirical material of this study has presented a challenge in this respect, but also served to enforce thorough descriptions and discussions and eschew rigid categorisations.

The historiographic discussion in Chapter 3 began by assessing the heritage from art history. Making it clear that my concern is not primarily design history as a whole, but the history of industrial design, I pointed to some aspects of this heritage that may be problematic: the primacy of (“good”) aesthetics, the bias towards creation, and the limited subject matter. How, then, have these problems cropped up in this study? Clearly, aesthetics is an important factor in the design discourse and practice I have been investigating, and it would be foolish not to treat it accordingly. However, I have emphasised many other aspects of design as well, and value judgements of “good” versus “poor” design have not been part of my selection criteria or method. The “ugly” products are just as important and interesting as the “beautiful” ones. What designers do and the results of that process have also been central concerns in this study. But here designers have been seen as negotiators and mediators rather than as “creators”, and design/products as components of material culture and mediators of meaning rather than as “creations”. Of the three outlined problems it is the limited scope of subject matter that has been the most pertinent in this study. This study’s limited success in moving much beyond the conventional sphere of domestic objects, however, does not reflect a

corresponding limited scope of interest with the author, but stems from the character of the sources and empirical material that has been used. The absence of mopeds and cash registers is not because the design of such products are not interesting, but because *Bonytt* and the applied art community did not (until, as we have seen, the end of the period under investigation) discuss such design and because Figgjo did not manufacture such products (and the industry who did had no contact whatsoever with the design community).

One of the chief ambitions of the more self-contained industrial design history has been to supersede or at least supplement the traditional preoccupation with elite design, high-end products, or “gourmet objects”. The timely advocacy for an industrial design history more focused on everyday objects is coming to fruition, although the fascination among many design historians for “geniuses” and “masterpieces” seems remarkably tenacious. By deliberately seeking out a highly mundane design practice as my subject matter, I hope this study has contributed to the appreciation of the extraordinary significance of the ordinary.

Another important issue in the articulation of an industrial design history has been the call for interdisciplinarity, partly as an antidote or counterweight to the heritage from art history. One might argue that this call has been heard and responded to, as there is today no shortage of examples of design history informed by a variety of more or less neighbouring disciplines. On the other hand, this development seems to have happened largely *ad hoc*, without much strategic debate within the design history discipline as to what this interdisciplinarity entails. As this study draws on some theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches hitherto little explored by design historians, it might be considered a proposition in such a debate.

Until quite recently industrial design history, just like art history and the history of technology, has focused largely on the sphere of production. Over the last couple of decades, however, increased attention has been given to the sphere of consumption as well. This is not a consumption study, and, as I argued in Chapter 3, substituting one bias for another is not a good solution. However, there is much to benefit from combining the spheres of production and consumption in industrial design history, and various types of mediation between the two are emerging as an increasingly favoured area of study. In a sense, the present study falls in line with this trend. The *Bonytt* discourse is—among other things—a process of mediation between designers and consumers, and Figgjo’s design strategies and practices also contain attempts at such mediation. As I hope to have shown, these mediations between production and consumption are also closely related to negotiations between ideology and pragmatism, between theory and practice.

One of the most prominent influences on recent design history has come from the field of material culture studies, especially the anthropological studies of consumption as a creative aspect of culture. However, it has been argued that this approach in its emphasis on consumption neglects the actual use of objects, fails to de-emphasize the production-consumption dichotomy, does not satisfactorily address the materiality of material culture, and places too much emphasis on the symbolic aspects of artefacts. But the biggest problem, at least in terms of researchability, is that the methods employed in this kind of material culture studies are normally developed to handle contemporary

concerns. To historians, many of these methods become irrelevant or inadmissible. Due to lack of sources and documentation it is much more difficult to study past than present consumption and use. This is true also of the present study. It certainly would have been interesting to learn how users responded to *Bonytt*'s propaganda and Figgjo's products, but I for one do not know how this could have been achieved. What is possible, though, is to gain an understanding of the mediation between the producers (of ideas/texts as well as of designs/products) and consumers/users. In various ways, both explicitly and implicitly, this study has explored how *Bonytt* imagined their readers and Figgjo imagined their consumers. Still, the focus must be said to have been primarily on the sphere of production—but the ambition has been to cast a wider net and broaden the notion of what the production of ideas, artefacts and meanings involves.

Chapter 3 concluded by arguing that a sound approach to design history required that we do not attribute any special privileges to design over other cultural phenomena historians might take interest in. If we see design as something fundamentally special, as having some intrinsic values and occupying some particularly privileged position in society, writing its history is bound to be an internalistic affair of little interest and significance to the (academic) world at large. Conceiving of design history as part of a broader cultural history is an effective vaccine against myopia and mythopoeia, as a broader outlook facilitates unforeseen contexts, relations and connections. It should be quite clear from the present study that design is a thoroughly cultural phenomenon, and consequently that design history can be approached as cultural history. I will thus maintain that, as a theoretically tolerant and topically inclusive field, cultural history provides fertile ground for developing new histories of industrial design. As this study (hopefully) has shown, there is much to gain from seeing design as culture; as a dialectic negotiation between system and practice, as permeated by both continuity and transformation; as both ideal and material.

Design history can hardly be said to have a very well-defined theoretical foundation and methodological apparatus. The exploration of alternative, additional and complementary references and sources of inspiration has surely begun, but few excursions have been made in the direction I have proposed: science and technology studies (STS). Perhaps the most prominent common feature of STS is a focus on process over product; an insistence on studying phenomena and meanings "in the making". Chapter 4 discussed some theoretical perspectives and methodological concepts drawn from STS that can serve as a basic framework and repertoire for historical studies of the *seamless web of sociodesign*. While I have argued for the relevance and benefit of appropriating these perspectives, frameworks, concepts and approaches to design history, there will always be some problematic aspects of such an endeavour.

The first of these STS concepts that were discussed, Actor-Network Theory (ANT), is both the more widespread and the more controversial one. ANT aims to describe how the development and distribution of facts and artefacts happens through negotiations between different actors/actants deploying various strategies preconditioned by their different interpretations, agendas, needs and desires. This focus on the co-production of meaning as a process of negotiations should be rather easily recognised in the present

study. Likewise, the symmetry between ideology (“facts”) and practice (artefacts) has been a core concern throughout the material.

ANT postulates that we must follow the actors, and study science—or in our case: design—in *action* by tracing controversies that allow us access and understand the transformations that interest us. To historians it is a challenge to get at “the action”, but by focusing on the debates over controversial issues I hope to have disclosed some of the dynamics that make up historical change. The imperative to follow the actors has also had the advantage of allowing for multiple vantage points—it has made it possible to study situations from many angles rather than from the perspective of just one or a few privileged actors. Such an approach emphasises the complexity and multi-vocality of the situations we have studied and results in richer historical interpretations.

Another central tenet of ANT is that process has priority over product, and the meaning of a given phenomenon is in the hands of later users. Moving through the empirical material, I have sought to focus on how the various mediators have contributed to the transformation of bits and pieces of meaning. As many of our examples have demonstrated, the intrinsic qualities of an idea or a product may have limited significance in the construction of meaning compared to how it is perceived, interpreted and used. Admittedly, this has not been a study of use *per se*, and might thus have neglected this decree. But on the other hand, we have seen how imagined and represented users have had very real influence on the fate of products. Moreover, the many actors in the Norwegian design community we have learned to know can be seen as “users” of design ideas that originated elsewhere (understood both as the geographical and the historical “elsewhere”—the past is, as we know, also a foreign country).¹ Thus, studying how these mediators transformed former and foreign ideas in this given local setting can also be said to conform with ANT’s assertion that the fate of a claim/fact (or artifact) is in the hands of its later users.

I am sure seasoned ANT scholars would find reasons to take issue with my attempt at appropriating their concept. Hopefully, however, I have avoided at least one of the greatest perils they have seen in outsiders appropriating ANT: that of considering it a methodological toolkit. To me, throughout this study, ANT has functioned more like a theoretical framework facilitating new and dynamic ways of thinking about design—or rather; *sociodesign*. The one aspect of ANT that has been the more controversial is perhaps also the one that has proved the more difficult to deploy consistently in this study: the notion of non-human actors and the prohibition of discriminating between humans and non-humans. While there is certainly no lack of artefacts in this study, nor of respect for their role in the *seamless web of sociodesign*, it has been more difficult to precisely articulate their agency. But as ANT seems less concerned with the notions of intentionality and causality that are normally associated with agency, the thought of nonhumans as actants on a par with human actants has become less impossible—although still not easy to implement in research and writing. Still, it has offered a fresh and rewarding perspective on how to think about design processes, products and their

1. David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

meanings. Particularly so as an incentive towards increased sensibility to materiality, relationality and process.

Whereas ANT functions more like a general theory or a conceptual framework, the second STS concept introduced in Chapter 4 is a more practical-methodological approach (that in many ways is based on ANT): script analysis. The idea of product script as a sort of “instruction manual” inscribed in artefacts to convey its the product’s intended use and meaning has been developed as an effort to facilitate closer analysis of how products transport and transform meaning.

As script analysis stems from STS, it originally operates with a rather technical or engineering-like notion of design as something pertaining to an artefact’s “technical content”. But to those of us more interested in sociodesign than in sociotechnology, this understanding seems unnecessarily narrow. In fact, as I hope to have shown in this study, the inscription of meaning in an artefact is by no means limited to its “technical content” but is equally the case regarding its design in general. Script analysis can be a highly valuable tool in the quest for better understanding of how a product’s utilitarian functions, aesthetic expressions, social meanings and cultural identities are constructed. I would thus argue that by appropriating script analysis, design studies/history does not only gain methodological strength, but may also contribute to the improvement of the concept itself by expanding the conception of design that goes into the theoretical basis of script analysis.

The sheer amount of artifacts that have been discussed above has precluded extensive use of detailed script analysis. Such an implementation of the concept seems to be better suited for more neatly delimited case studies. The presence and influence of script analysis has thus perhaps not been made explicit too many places throughout this study, but it certainly has informed my thinking of how products transport and transform meaning, and can thus be said to permeate the entire work nonetheless.

On the more general level script analysis calls attention to what goes on between the sphere of production and the sphere of consumption and use. Such a perspective fits well with the focus on mediation and translation that has dominated this study. What has proved to be a great advantage of script analysis to design history in this respect is that it brings the artefacts we study alive and highlights their roles in the processes of mediation and translation—irrespective of whether we approach them from the sphere of production or the sphere of consumption/use.

The third and last STS concept that was discussed in Chapter 4, domestication, stems from the turn towards greater attention to the active role of consumers and users in creating the meaning of technological artifacts. The metaphoric term domestication is used to denote the co-production of the social and the technical taking place in the reciprocal relationship between people and things. Domestication is the utilitarian and emotional adaptation to and appropriation of artifacts through which their meaning is negotiated and constructed. Studying such processes of how users turn commodities into functional things, meaningful objects and expressive symbols clearly would be a interesting take on design history. However, as mentioned above, studying past consumption and use is fraught with epistemological and methodological problems, making a direct transfer of domestication from the social sciences to history

troublesome. Still, at least to some extent, empirical studies of historic use and consumption can be conducted by going after the imagined users or the represented users. While consumers behaviour and user response have not been primary concerns in this study, I hope to have made some contact with this important, but seemingly elusive side of material culture by focusing on the arenas and actors of mediation, translation and transformation.

My major motivation for introducing the concept of domestication was, however, not to facilitate studies of consumption and use, but to explore its potential as a metaphoric conceptualization of how ideas, ideals and ideologies are both adopted to and appropriated. This shift of focus from the domestication of products to the domestication of ideologies is supported by the general emphasis in STS theory on not discriminating between facts (theories/ideologies) and artefacts (objects/products). It might be argued that my analogy between design ideologies and what is normally meant by “fact” in STS, namely scientific theories, is less than perfect, but as the “factuality” of scientific theories in STS rarely is considered more absolute or inherent than that of design ideologies, I would assert that the analogy works—at least for the purpose at hand.

While most domestication studies have shown how the forms and meanings of technologies and products are not fixed, inherent properties, but the result of reciprocal negotiation, I profess to have shown in this study that much in the same way, the forms and meanings of ideas, ideals and ideologies are not either fixed, inherent properties, but equally the result of reciprocal negotiation. Thus, the domestication of ideology becomes a valid and valuable approach to studying the transformation of meaning in design culture as played out through both debate and practice.

As a first site of domestication, the Norwegian design community both adopted to and appropriated modernist design ideology and thus transformed these ideas and ideals to better suit their needs and desires in their efforts to improve the standing of the design field, the conditions for design professionals and the quality of design practice. For instance, we have seen how the Norwegian applied art community largely shunned the use of “alien” steel in furniture for the home in favour of the more “familiar” wood, and how large-scale mass-production was sought reconciled with more traditional, craft-based modes of manufacture; all as part of the pursuit of a modern design more appropriate to the contemporary, local setting. In turn, this domesticated modernism was then fed back into the international design world, e.g. through exhibitions and thus contributing to the transformation of the general modern design ideals.

As a second site of domestication, Figgjo both adopted to and appropriated modernist design ideology and thus transformed these ideas and ideals to better suit their needs and desires in their efforts to create a viable business, increasing the quality and desirability of their products and contributing to the development of design practice. For instance, we have seen how they partly adopted to the (modified) modernist ideology promoted by the design community and the “Scandinavian Design” idiom of the 1950s by launching products devoid of conventional decor, but at the same time appropriated the this formal language, modifying it e.g. by the use of fashionable colours so that it was deemed salable to a general public. In turn, this domesticated modernism was then fed back into

the Norwegian design discourse and the general material culture through the proliferation of the products.

The great advantage of the concept of domestication is its insistence on the reciprocity, continuity and dynamism of the process. It helps us understand how the *seamless web of sociodesign* is co-produced and in continuous transformation, thus allowing us better to articulate the dynamics of cultural change.

Having briefly revisited some of the theoretical perspectives underpinning this study, it is now time to offer a summary of the empirical study, trying to excerpt the major findings. The summary's structure will echo that of the empirical material as well as reflect the above reiterated theoretical conceptualizations of design culture as dialectic between ideology and practice and the notion of a two-sided domestication of ideology.

21.3 Constructing design discourse

There is no denying that many of the topics, questions and problems that this study has discussed have roots, precursors and backgrounds prior to 1940. It should suffice to mention two such background histories that were—however briefly—presented in Chapters 5 and 8 respectively; that of the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) founded in 1918, and the over 20 years long career of designer Ragnar Grimsrud prior to his employment at Figgjo. Nevertheless, both in terms of transitions within the design community and changes in industrial development, there is much indicating that the 1940s inaugurated a new phase for Norwegian design.

The various debates, events and initiatives played out during this dramatic and difficult decade can thus be considered an attempt at *constructing design discourse*. As a new propaganda vehicle and arena for debate, the design magazine *Bonytt* was created with the purpose of *setting the agenda* in this discourse on the materiality of modernity. As a representative of the new, expanding manufactured goods industry, where entrepreneurship outshone experience, the ceramics manufacturer Figgjo wanted in on *setting the table*—both literally and figuratively speaking—in Modern Norway. Together these formations of ideology and practice co-constructed a new discourse of design culture.

When publication of *Bonytt* commenced in January 1941, the Norwegian design community got a new and effective communication platform. Although the magazine resulted from a private initiative, it responded to a dream the Applied Art Association (Foreningen Brukskunst) had pursued with little success for twenty years; that of a vehicle for public education, design propaganda and professional debate. Although the agreement making *Bonytt* the official mouthpiece of the organization then renamed the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst—LNB) was not signed until 1947, the close relation between the two institutions was apparent from day one. This partnership would prove most effective in *setting the agenda* and *constructing design discourse*.

Not only did the institutions discussed here have their antecedents—so did the ideas that were debated. At times, though, these precursory components got imbued with heavy symbolism and wildly exaggerated, ending up as a highly questionable historic outlook. Everything good of the past could be labelled as actually being products of an eternally true functionalism. Thus, both ancient Greek pots and British Queen Anne-style furniture were enrolled to argue the case of functionalism as an ahistorical truth. In many ways, such “ancient functionalism” seems to have been easier to come to terms with than the quintessential symbols of avant-garde functionalism. Thus, tubular steel furniture was ridiculed as “bicycle chairs” and “machine furniture”, and dismissed as unfit for domestic use. On the whole, internationalism and avant-garde modernism were troublesome concepts in 1940s Norway, where nationalism, patriotism and traditionalism resurged. In short, modernist design ideology had to be domesticated.

One possible way of domesticating modern design could be through the time-honoured practice of decor. But avant-garde modernism had made decor a problematic concept. The debate on “decor in our time” should be seen in light of this situation, where the attempt at finding decor strategies appropriate for modern design was launched as a potential solution to what was perceived as the austerity and anonymity of much modern design. The debate on “decor in our time” revealed that the majority of the applied art community agreed that decor was a desirable feature of design, but disagreed fiercely on what modern decor should be. In the contemporary setting, intense negotiations were needed between the fondness of the national heritage and the strong decorative traditions of the applied arts in general on the one hand, and the aversion to historicism and naturalism prescribed by avant-garde modernism.

In continuation of the decor question, the need for putting a human face on modernism took on several other forms. The stern “bicycle chairs” of the Bauhaus just would not cut it. In order to work in a local context, modernism had to be domesticated. This task entailed a greater attention to objects’ emotional functions, their alignment with heritage and tradition, and their general integration into local and regional cultures. Avant-garde modernism was to a large extent seen as a good starting point for new approaches to design in the industrial era, but as crude and unfinished basis that was in dire need of being further developed, transformed and refined in regional and local settings. An “International Style” was not at all desired in the Norwegian design community. But the question of to what degree such local characteristics could be cultivated within a system of industrial manufacture remained a problematic issue.

Another important topic under debate in the 1940s, and that would resurface in various forms for decades to come, was the promises and dangers of industrial production systems. The Norwegian applied art community had ever since the founding of the Applied Art Association (*Foreningen brukskunst*), despite rhetorical infatuation with industrial mass-production, been firmly rooted in the tradition of the artisan-craftsman and the studio/workshop production. The expected and partially experienced increased dominance of industrial mass-production during and after World War II was thus met with highly ambivalent feelings. Its consequences both on culture, society, economy and product quality were feared, but at the same time, its possible virtues and

democratizing potential fascinated. In a sense, this debate can be seen as the prelude to the fragmentation of the design community and design professions in the 1960s.

Although the activity of designing products for industrial manufacture is of course as old as the manufactured goods industry itself, the (English) term “industrial design” is a far more recent phenomenon in Norway. The term was introduced in *Bonytt* by editor Arne Remlov in 1945. Tracing terminology in itself might not be all that important, but the introduction of the term is closely linked to a debate on the role and identity of the industrial designer. Needless to say, there was no specialized industrial design education in 1940s Norway (nor would there be for a long time), so the increased attention to this “new” function about to become a profession in its own right set off a battle for hegemony: Who was the better designer? Which of the existing design professionals were better qualified to design for industry? Architects argued for their universal design expertise, craftsman-designers argued for their intimate knowledge of materials and production processes, and interior architects and furniture designers positioned themselves somewhere in between. Architects generally did not pursue this new occupation, so the first generation of what might be called professional industrial designers in Norway would largely come from the ranks of craft-trained designers, interior architects and furniture designers.

Given the risks of censorship, restrictions on travel and communications, and general shortage of resources imposed by the wartime occupation, the first half of the 1940s was hardly an ideal period for promoting design. The regained freedom in 1945 must surely have been exciting. One of the consequences was that the borders were reopened, and reports from fairs, exhibitions and conventions in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Copenhagen, London and elsewhere were brought to the *Bonytt* readers. This made for new impressions, and at the same time opened up new horizons. The end of the war also meant new possibilities for organizational work. For instance, the Association of Interior Architects (Interiørarkitektene Forening—IAF) was founded in 1945, headed by Arne Remlov, and organized the growing number of interior designers—many of whom had completed their studies at the National College of Applied Art and Craft (Statens Håndverks- og Kunstindustriskole—SHKS) during the war. The Applied Art Association had not been able to do much during the war, and was reorganized in 1946 to better meet the challenges of postwar conditions. Local chapters were set up in the larger cities (Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Stavanger and Kristiansand), under the auspices of the National Association Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst—LNB). Recalling the strategy from the interwar period, exhibitions became the organization’s weapon of choice in the quest for a better designed Norway.

One of the first postwar exhibitions was entitled *Facing Reconstruction* (*Foran gjenreisningen*). The symbolic importance of this name/theme can hardly be overestimated. In the first postwar years, the reconstruction of the country—both physically and mentally—was job number one. The design community understood perfectly well that it was very important under the current circumstances that their quest for better home environments was not regarded as mere aesthetics, as something nonessential and redundant in these times of material scarcity and basic needs. Their mission would not stand a chance if it was not closely connected with the reconstruction.

There were approximately 400 ceramic manufacturers in Norway in the late 1940s, an astonishing number in a nation with about 3,2 million inhabitants. The reason was mainly that the entire decade had been characterized by severe import restrictions and material shortages due to the war, something which had led to an unparalleled wave of start-ups of small pottery studios and workshops during and after the war—one of which was Figgjo. The majority of these lacked any real experience from and formal training in ceramic production, as well as the aesthetic orthodoxy. It was this wave of makeshift entrepreneurship that gave rise to the taunting epithet the “ashtray industry”.

Figgjo was founded by two local entrepreneurs in 1941, as a highly amateurish and makeshift pottery workshop in a small rural community, from which the company took its name, nearby Stavanger in the south-west of Norway. Under wartime occupation, a very modest enterprise was set up, based on an outdated hydroelectric power plant as production site, a hen house as model workshop, a local bookshop as retailer, and with a minimum of capital and know-how. Hardly the ideal circumstances for setting up shop, in other words. But the peculiar situation offered certain advantages as well. The wartime lapse of import of a host of essential commodities resulted not only in a vast array of pronounced *ersatz* products such as fish skin shoes, but also in increased exploitation of domestically available resources and an obvious seller’s market. Thus, one did not need much experience in design, production and business to make saleable pottery in the 1940s. Rationalized production runs, technical quality, design quality, marketing and efficient distribution were not make or brake parameters for manufacturers under the current circumstances. In this situation, Figgjo was more or less guaranteed that they would sell anything they could offer. The earliest products bore clear evidence of this situation. Simple, traditional objects like ashtrays, plates, vases and jars dominated. The quality of the designs are highly variable, from the most unappealing, clumsy, and chunky objects of questionable use value, to items of more a well-proportioned, sensible, harmonious character.

However, the Figgjo entrepreneurs soon realized that this situation would not last, and that if they were to stand a chance at *setting the table* in postwar Norway, drastic measures were needed. In short, the company had to expand and be professionalised. The entrepreneurs were not craftsmen, and thus had no sentimental or habitual attachment to workshop manufacture. One can only assume, then, that they saw a shift towards industrial manufacture as a logical way to pursue. Once the war was over and the external circumstances allowed for it, the Figgjo management made the decision to turn their small-time operation into a factory. This was not just a question of scale and organization, though; it also entailed a shift from blue clay pottery to earthenware. Blue clay pottery made sense for a small-scale manufacturer depending completely on local resources, but was not suited for industrial manufacture nor for utility tableware.

While continuing to manufacture pottery, the preparations for earthenware production began. The factory buildings were expanded, two tunnel kilns designed for mass-production were built, heavy machinery for mechanized production was procured, and the workforce was multiplied. Preparing and running an industrial factory required a whole other level of expertise than operating a little amateurish pottery workshop. Therefore, both management, design and production staffs were professionalised

considerably during the first postwar years. This development was reflected also in the resulting products, even before earthenware production commenced. The material quality and design quality of the pottery products increased drastically in the postwar period, and the distribution network was expanded to a national level.

Although a lot of key personnel were hired during the first postwar years to help develop Figgjo into a modern industrial company, one man stands out because of his central role in management and design and the remarkable perseverance and allegiance to the company: Ragnar Grimsrud, general manager, design manager and designer at Figgjo through 27 years from 1946. His vast experience with ceramic production, design, design management, along with his versatile talents and managerial qualities made him decidedly qualified to plan and guide the transformation of Figgjo from pottery workshop to earthenware factory.

For Figgjo, the 1940s can be described as a transition from being a bona fide representative of the “ashtray industry” towards a position closer to—but still not part of—the industrial art establishment. And as a representative of the new, expanding manufactured goods industry, Figgjo contributed to *setting the table* in Modern Norway. Although Figgjo throughout the 1940s remained somewhat of an outsider, the company and its products did make their mark on the material culture of a society on the brink of a new order characterized by the onset of the welfare state, increased industrialization, and consumerism. As such, Figgjo and its pottery helped *constructing design discourse*.

21.4 Negotiating design networks

Whereas the 1940s was a period of construction, of beginnings and nascent endeavours, of setting both the agenda and the table, of constructing design discourse, the 1950s were characterized by maintenance, development, maturation and expansion—in both spheres. It is only by *negotiating design networks* that expansion and increased momentum can be achieved. But development and expansion also means more actors, more interests, more possibilities, more challenges, more power, more controversies—in short; more complexity. So, to curb fragmentation and avoid segregation, the negotiations put *translations on the agenda* and set *translations on the table*.

As the major arena for debate within the design community, *Bonytt* became the primary channel for many different types of translations of many different types of messages between many different types of actors. As a company in the midst of a transitional process between craft pottery and industrial earthenware and china, between local and international markets, between conventions and inventions, between traditions and advances, between pragmatism and idealism, Figgjo too engaged in many forms of translations.

At the onset of the 1950s, *Bonytt* was firmly established as the undisputed arena for design debate in Norway. The decade can be seen as the period where the networks constructed by the magazine and the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforeningen Norsk Brukskunst—LNB) reached their maximum extension and

momentum. Neither before nor after have their power and influence been greater. The professional community grew more mature, offensive and confident. But along with momentum and influence came complexity and controversies—it got increasingly difficult for the chieftains to keep the tight formation and control the discourse as more and more actors were enrolled and sub-groups representing different interests were formed. Negotiating larger and more disparate design networks required ever more intricate translation work. *Bonytt* thus became highly important as the primary arena for negotiating design networks by putting *translations on the agenda*—and many were the issues requiring attention.

One of the most remarkable transitions in the mediation of design ideology in the course of the 1950s is the shift from social vocation to artistic expression. In the early years of the decade, the postwar reconstruction issue in general and the housing problem in particular was still a very hot and sensitive topic. Continuing the strategy of the late 1940s, the design community invested heavily in their contribution to this great sociopolitical movement, e.g. by organizing housing exhibitions in social housing projects in the new satellite towns and writing advice literature on how the common man should consume products and furnish his home “correctly”. There is no doubt that most of this activity stemmed from a genuine social concern, but at the same time it can—at least partly—be seen to have a tactical side to it. Surely, it was at the time easier to sell modernist design ideals in the name of hygiene, rationality, economy and utility than in the name of aesthetics, taste and culture. The most surprising aspect of this trajectory, however, is that this social vocation seems to have diminished drastically—at least among the leading ideologists—quite quickly. Within a few years, *Bonytt* the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art turned their attention more and more towards the elite production and prestigious exhibition projects, spurred by the ambition to reach what was perceived to be the higher level of such production in the other Nordic countries. Translations were made between the notion of design as a rational tool in the service of the social democratic welfare state and the notion of design as an artistic expression of culture.

Other and more comprehensive translations were made on the subject of craft-based vs. industrialized production. This discussion is rather complex, as it converged from a variety of agendas and arguments. Some maintained that the craft-based production tradition was part and parcel of the qualities of Scandinavian design, whereas others were more interested in the potential social/democratic ramifications of a further industrialized production. Some advised against mass-production on economic and geographical grounds, claiming that our industrial structure and available markets were simply too small, while others again warned that handicraft led to elitism, expressionism and conservative design in a modern world. Ultimately, though, at least in the more traditional parts of the applied art community, the argument seems to have hinged on the assertion that it was in fact the craft-based production systems that had succeeded in bringing good design to the masses in Scandinavia, and that industrialized mass-production carried more problems than potential for Norwegian design.

Many of the fears expressed regarding industrial production were reactions to the large-scale mass-production at the time closely connoted to the USA. Such conditions

were hardly plausible in Norway. Still, the Norwegian manufactured goods industry grew considerably both in terms of production volume and degree of mechanization in the 1950s, and the design community had little choice but to start taking industry seriously. The rationalization of production was largely seen as beneficial, making products more available to a wider segment of the population. Little by little, or at least occasionally, product categories that had been alien to the traditional craft, applied art and industrial art sphere began to make their appearance in the design community, and “industrial design” became, perhaps not a household term, but somewhat less of a foreign word. But there was still a widespread opinion that industrial manufacturers were too conservative in their design practice compared to the best craft-based manufacturers—although improvements were noted and lauded. Still, skills closely related to the craft trades and craft training were considered a vital element in guaranteeing a high quality of design even within the framework of industrial manufacture. But questions were being raised as to the future role of craft in an industrial society. This nascent polarization, or diversification of the design field would come to require probably the most demanding translation work that the holistically attuned parts of the design community were ever faced with.

For apparent reasons, both the design community and the industry had since the end of the war concentrated their efforts on the domestic scene. Both the reconstruction efforts, the industrial development, the material shortages, and the import restrictions contributed to this situation. But in the 1950s, the Norwegian industry and design community started to look beyond the national borders—not for inspiration and know-how, but with extrovert purposes in mind. Central initiatives from the design community in this respect were the many exhibitions mounted abroad throughout the decade. Exhibitions of various kinds, scope and ambition were shown in Great Britain, USA, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Italy and France. Generally speaking, although to a varying degree, they all shared a dual purpose: Firstly, seeking to establish Norwegian design on a par with that of the neighbouring countries—i.e. a cultural promotion of design. Secondly, seeking to create an interest for Norwegian design and products in foreign markets—i.e. a commercial promotion of design. It seems clear, though, that the former ambition was regarded as the more important among the design community, and that the latter ambition was naively construed and poorly handled—at times, the commercial promotion even appears to have been more like a front for the cultural promotion.

The 1950s was the era of the geopolitics of the cold war, NATO membership, Marshall aid, and the proliferation of North American popular culture, and there was no shortage of multiple or ambivalent attitudes towards the USA—even within the design community. No single event brought this ambivalence to the fore like the MoMA-organized exhibition that toured Europe and came to Norway in January 1954, entitled *Amerikansk Form*. This display of American elite design and high-end products was met with great enthusiasm in the Norwegian design community, but commentators made sure to point out that the exhibition did not represent what they regarded as the deplorable mainstream American design, epitomized by streamlined cars. The most ambitious translation the opposite way, from Norwegian to American, was the contribution to the Nordic exhibition *Design in Scandinavia* that toured the USA and Canada from 1954 to

1957. What is particularly interesting about the Norwegian contribution to this event is that the organizing body, the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), stressed the significance of this opportunity in terms of export possibilities as the prime motive for this arduous initiative. In light of this rhetoric, it is interesting to discover that the Norwegian committee chose to exhibit predominantly low-volume products such as craft objects and high-end industrial art. Some more mundane industrial products were shown as well, but it seems clear that the organizers believed export potential of Norwegian design lay in cultivating the applied art tradition rather than in trying to challenge the larger markets and more heavily industrialised countries in the sphere of industrial design.

Much the same can be said of Norway's debut at the "Design Olympics"—the 1950s' *Triennali di Milano*. Norway's first appearance here, at the *X Triennale* in 1954, was underpinned by the same arguments of export potential, but the installation shown is best described as Arne Korsmo's one-man-show and *Gesamtkunstwerk*—an attempt at selling art as design. As such, however, the event must be said to have been quite the success. This image would change quite drastically when returning to Milan for the *XI Triennale* in 1957, chiefly due to the enrolment of new actor groups. This time, the Norwegian contribution was organized by the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)), and a parallel or competing private section counted the National Institute of Industrial Research (Sentralinstituttet for industriell forskning) among its sponsors. This made for a manifestation of a different kind, where industrial design was more prevalent than at the previous edition, although the more conventional applied art also found its place. The emphasis on industrial research and rationality can be seen as an attempt at selling design as science. These various translations of what design was and how it should be portrayed when promoting Norwegian design abroad are illustrative of the negotiations of design networks that reached the height of their complexity in the 1950s.

Central parts of the design community, especially the leading segment of the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst), were fundamentally idealists at heart. This made for an ambience where the more worldly aspects of design practice, such as the commercial realities of business, the challenges of manufacturing technology, the mechanisms of the market economy, and the unruly public taste were often considered nuisances—unfortunate obstacles on the way to a world of better design as devised by designers and ideologists. Such attitudes remained widespread, but throughout the 1950s there was a tendency towards making room for compromise and pragmatism in these matters—at least occasionally. It may seem as though the growth and expansion in the manufactured goods industry brought about a greater acknowledgment of the many sides to industrial design practice that are less than "ideal" from the perspective of the chief ideologists of the applied art community. Nowhere was this new appreciation as clear as when Figgio's design manager rather unexpectedly was called upon to address the issue in *Bonytt*, where he pointed to the prominence of market comprehension and manufacturability in design and product development. The concern for the realities of industrial mass-production was also the prime mover for the foundation of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID,

Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in March 1955. A group of designers who were more interested in the problem-solving character of product development within the industry than artistic treatment of materials consolidated to further their case.

The foundation of ID-gruppen did not represent any vigorous revolt against the applied art movement, but rather a desire to establish a smaller and more coherent arena which could debate and act more efficiently on issues of specific interest to the select circles of industrial designers. Nevertheless, the establishment of ID-gruppen marks the beginning of a process running over two decades where the movement, term and profession associated with applied art (*brukskunst*) is fragmented, specialized; challenged from two sides—industrial design (*industridesign*) and handicraft (*kunsthåndverk*). In the wider design community, a gap was thus slowly forming between handicraft and industrial design. However, in the 1950s, the differences were still thought possible to overcome by means of translations between the various fractions, and the universalist ideals were still in high standing, often tending towards a focus on similarities rather than discrepancies. Issues pertaining to the moral and aesthetic issues regarding good design versus bad design were thus often given priority over the categorical questions concerning professional frontiers, manufacturing systems, social responsibilities and consumer interests.

Another trait that seems to characterize the 1950s is a greater public acceptance of modern design. This development was welcomed both by ideologists and practitioners, albeit for partially different reasons. Practitioners and manufacturers saw a new and greater market potential for modern design, something which opened up for experimentation, novel design, niche products, and more product differentiation. The applied art community seems to have interpreted the perceived shift in public taste as a victory for the long battle fought by the applied art movement. But at the same time, there are indications that this new popularity was not entirely regarded as a blessing: In the wake of the greater public acceptance of modern design came a renewed attention to the distinctive power of the modernist aesthetic. The other side to it was a renewed enthusiasm for promoting the unaffected—particularly among the more modest manufacturers such as Figgjo. Both these tendencies, however, are examples of translations: They show that the modernist aesthetic at the same time can be sought translated into elitism as well as populism. All in all, the *Bonytt* trajectory of the 1950s can be read as an effort to put *translations on the agenda* and *negotiating design networks*.

Figgjo had spent the latter part of the 1940s preparing their escape from the disreputable category of the “ashtray industry”, and the official leap to the status of earthenware factory was marked by changing the company name to Figgjo Fajanse A/S in 1949. This bold, ambitious and risky endeavour was motivated by the realization that Figgjo could not survive making ashtrays, vases and makeshift teapots out of a hen house and a disused power plant. The demand and market for domestic utensils would remain considerable throughout the 1950s, but in order to compete in the modern Norway of increasing prosperity and industrialized manufacture, product qualities, design and market appeal were seen as the key success factors.

The transition from henhouse handicraft to fordist factory was fraught with negotiations and translations of many kind. The early 1950s saw substantial expansions both of the manufacturing facilities, the workforce, and the production volume. With 350 employees and an annual output of ten million units by the middle of the decade, there was little left of the amateurish pottery workshop. Science, organization theory, technology and mechanization are essential parameters in this development, epitomised in the establishment of an in-house laboratory and the image constructed around it. Ceramic engineering expertise was brought in from England, time-and-motion studies became a significant feature, and organizational analysis and market research was carried out—all in the name of building a modern, rational, efficient industrial company. But one of the most evident types of translation took place in the public realm, where an image of artistic traditions was sought reconciled with that of scientific rationality.

A more palpable sort of translation going on in the new factory was the one turning clays, stone and minerals into tableware. This process became far more intricate with the transition to industrial earthenware. The number of actants increased considerably, and the negotiations became much more complex, but also more formalized. Clay is an organic substance, and of a heterogeneous nature. It thus requires constant attention, adjustment and adaptation—i.e. ongoing negotiation. To complicate matters further, several kinds of foreign clay were enrolled, alongside other local ingredients. The chemists, engineers, technicians, and machinery equipment at Figgjo spent a lot of time and effort making all these go along. But this preliminary agreement was only the basis for further negotiations in the translation from mass to matter. Primed with a host of other prerequisite concerns, the designers and modellers faced the material's properties and the prescriptions and proscriptions of the manufacturing system. The peculiar qualities of the plaster moulds, the forming of the running shoes of the turnery machines, the infrastructure challenges and infernal heat of the kilns, the logistics of the production run, along with plenty other factors sure made for tough negotiations in the translation from clay to cup. These may be neatly defined local/internal modes of *negotiating design networks*, but there are of course other, more messy modes as well.

One of the most difficult tasks of all in this respect was to formulate and implement a design strategy that would successfully translate the industrial goods into household objects. The 1950s were characterized by a protected domestic market. Tariff barriers restricted competition from foreign manufacturers, but also made it difficult for Norwegian companies to venture into export. So although the demand for household goods was still very high, the minute size (in an international perspective) of the Norwegian market constituted quite a challenge. Finding niche markets of sufficient size was very difficult, so any industrial manufacturer had to—as Figgjo's design manager Ragnar Grimsrud so eloquently put it when explaining his position in *Bonytt*—“offer ‘something for everyone’.” So, what we see here, then, is the dawning of a design strategy aiming to please just about any potential customer by courting very different styles and tastes—all safely within the boundaries of average household economies, that is. The slightly romanticized, traditional and rather humdrum product range of the first few years was superseded by two main tendencies—one dominated by historicising, quasi-baroque forms, naturalistic decor and gold rims, and one dominated by more

ideologically “correct” modernist design, i.e. simple, non-intrusive forms and no or at least highly abstracted decor. The pragmatism and prudence represented by Figgjo’s design strategy in the 1950s clearly stands out when compared with the ideological debates of the design community discussed above—but then again; the studio craftsmen, educators, writers, museum curators and art historians of the applied art community did not have the same burden of financial responsibility as Figgjo’s management faced every day. Thus, Figgjo’s mode of *negotiating design networks* reached far more thoroughly into aspects such as market adjustment, marketing and commercialism, the fiscal realities of mass-production and commercial business management, as well as manufacturability and the logistics and economics of factory production.

Despite the modernist convictions of design manager Grimsrud, Figgjo did not believe that the market would accept a production range consisting exclusively of modernist design. In fact, Figgjo’s assortment in the early fifties indicates that they were convinced that the great majority of customers in this “modern” decade wanted conventional, traditionalistic and nostalgic design, and the longevity and popularity of these products shows that they were hardly mistaken. Among the first service models from the modern earthenware factory were two series whose formal languages and product images are best described as portraying invented traditions and notional nostalgia. Modern industrial goods were translated into conveyors of heritage and tradition. These traditionalistic designs, sporting decors with extensive use of gold, elaborate patterns, and naturalistic floral motifs, became very successful in the marketplace, and are essential in understanding the company’s design practice in the 1950s. These products also testify to the fact that not everyone went modern in the 1950s—or perhaps rather that there are many ways of being modern. Traditionalistic designs were very much present in this decade that is often portrayed as the heyday of the modernism represented by Scandinavian Design—although they were completely ignored by the design community at the time.

But the strategy of offering “something for everyone” also meant designing products of a more modernist appearance and nature, aimed at “the attentive public”. Throughout the 1950s, Figgjo launched a range of service models that to a much higher degree conformed to the modernist design idiom. Still, startlingly modern formal expressions were avoided, as it was seen as potentially alienating to the average consumer. The solution was to go for a design that appears familiar and friendly, but at the same time modern and untraditional. The one design feature Figgjo used to achieve this effect was the technique known as coloured clay mass coating, or *engobe* decor. This ornamental use of colour greatly contributed to the commercial success of these service models, as plates and cups in cheerful colours might have satisfied what was incessantly perceived as the general public’s flare for joy and cosiness. At the same time, the technique made for rational production, and, due to the simple and abstract character of the ornamental features, these products were also acceptable to the design community. This coloured tableware managed to combine credibility and commerciality; it was Figgjo’s way of translating modernist design ideals into commercially viable merchandise.

Much due to the colourful interpretation of modernism represented by these latter products, Figgjo reached an unprecedented level of acknowledgment within the design

community, and were allowed a few guest performances among the elite. This acknowledgment received a further boost and an all-time high towards the end of the decade when the company hired the widely acclaimed designer Hermann Bongard on a freelance basis. Normally relying exclusively on in-house designers, this way of obtaining creativity on commission was the exception rather than the rule at Figgjo, but the collaboration with Bongard generated some interesting and successful results—both in terms of experimental projects and professional acclaim, but also in terms of design quality and commercial success.

Norwegian national economy and business policy underwent dramatic changes during the 1950s, and these macroeconomic developments made great impact on private industrial enterprises—including Figgjo. Norway ventured into international free trade agreements rather reluctantly, but towards the end of the fifties, the international development towards free trade accelerated, and Norwegian industry eventually lost most of the domestic market protection the government had provided through import restrictions and tariff barriers. Put somewhat crudely, this meant export or die to Figgjo and the rest of the Norwegian manufactured goods industry. Establishing profitable export proved difficult, and many did die in the years to come. Figgjo worked hard to rationalize their production and to get a foothold in a few key export markets, and did survive, although turbulent times were ahead. The translation from domestic to international enterprise was difficult, and would require drastic measures and a lot of work.

In short, in the 1950s, Figgjo set a whole range of different *translations on the table*—both on the turning table, the work table, the kitchen table and the round-table—and all this translation work can further be seen as a part of the wider activity of *negotiating design networks* characterizing the Norwegian design culture in this decade torn between expansion and complexity, concord and controversy.

21.5 Reconfiguring design cultures

The universalist ideals that had entailed strenuous efforts of translations and negotiations within increasingly complex and expanding design networks in the 1950s disintegrated in the following decade. Powerful groupings and strong forces within the established design community—particularly the advocates of applied art movement—continued to fight for the holistic/universalistic approach to design so characteristic of the so-called Scandinavian Design that reached its zenith in the 1950s well into the new decade, but their quest became harder by the day. New controversies arose, new programs were formed, new actors emerged—all with variously grounded ambitions of *clearing the agenda* for something new. Similarly, Figgjo's universalist ideals of being an all-round supplier of tableware, offering “something for everyone”, were shattered in the encounter with the brave, new world of international free trade in the 1960s. Transforming the company into a niche actor on the international scene turned out to be a journey into uncharted and troubled waters, and only by *clearing the table* for a new and more distinct

design strategy would they survive. Albeit in very different ways, both the ideological and the practical sides to the discourses amount to *reconfiguring design cultures*.

In the midst of these reconfigurations, there was also a trajectory that represented continuity from the previous decade—the lingering desire for international fame. The wee bit of international attention and acclaim that had been bestowed upon Norwegian design in the 1950s—much due to the synergy effect created by a pronounced pan-Nordic sentiment and the according strategy of communal design promotion—whet the appetite. Although the great international propaganda events of the 1950s lost some of their remarkable prominence in the 1960s, they still played a significant role in the auto-poiesis of the Norwegian design community. It is interesting, though, that the design community—at least its major organizational entity, the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst)—saw it as its task to create cultural goodwill for Norwegian design, not to create sales. Fame had precedence over fortune.

The identification of industrial design as a field in its own right proved to be a prolonged process. After the English term *industrial design* appeared for the first time in *Bonytt* in 1945, a decade passed before the first major act of professionalisation came with the founding of the Norwegian Group of Industrial Designers (ID, Norsk gruppe for industriell formgivning (ID-gruppen)) in 1955. This marked the acknowledgment of a distinct professional identity for industrial designers and a gradually emerging challenge to the holistic approach represented by the movement, term and profession associated with *applied art (brukskunst)*. In the 1960s, this identification of industrial design was continued and intensified. An important event in this respect was the first large-scale exhibition specifically devoted to industrial design in Norway in 1963. In a design community where the heritage from the applied art movement still loomed large, a new generation of experienced industrial designers took an interest in *clearing the agenda* for a new and more specialized field and profession.

Whereas the industrial designers manoeuvred towards new design tasks, moving into domains previously dominated by engineers and seeking greater influence and acceptance in the world of commerce, industry and business, the studio craftsmen were moving in the opposite direction. Aesthetic expression, artistic quality, formal originality and material effects became more and more important aspects of their work while topics such as utilitarian functions, dissemination, manufacturability, etc. were quickly downgraded—a process that might be described as the “artification” of arts and craft. In the modern, industrialized consumer society of the 1960s, craftsmen realized that their trade could not be about delivering affordable utilitarian objects, and began *clearing the agenda* for an activity to be appreciated on its own conditions: as unique, hand-made, personal, expressive—in short; as art.

Neither industrial designers nor craftsmen were content with the term applied art (*brukskunst*) as a universal common denominator for their work. So, holding the wider design community together became an increasingly difficult task. Efforts were not in short supply, though, and what seems to have been the most frequently applied strategy in constructing a common denominator, a unifying trait, was insisting on the artistic aspects on design. The general idea in the applied art community seemed to be that the artistic aspects of handicraft and industrial design might be different in scale, but not in

essence. It would prove far more difficult to draw the line between design and engineering or artisanry. Their prevailing, but increasingly strained argument was that artefacts like a propeller or a pair of skis might very well be beautiful, but they could not be considered design, because they lacked a willed, aesthetic pretension—in other words: *art* had not been *applied* to them. Hence, when push came to shove, the applied art community resorted to the most basic and reductive understanding of the term applied art. The industrial designers were both less afraid of engineering and less insistent on the artistic aspect, but some traits, like the simplicity they so arduously championed, could be interpreted as an artistic component of their work.

An interesting development in the 1960s is the trend towards justifying “the need for cosiness”. The heyday of hard-core functionalism was of course long gone, but the introduction of the concept of emotional functions still must have been rather radical at this time. Remaining safely within a modernist frame of mind, more and more designers and critics began acknowledging that the cosiness, nostalgia and sentimental values consumers associated with their objects had to be considered functions on a level with the most rational, tangible and measurable utilitarian function. Concrete suggestions as to how modern design were to meet these challenges and incorporate this insight into the design of new products, however, were few and far between.

The question of whether the consumer was a friend or a foe is a recurring theme in the Norwegian design community of the 1960s. The level of empowerment and morality assigned to the consumer varied over time, from person to person, and even from argument to argument. The erratic character of this discourse was augmented by the tendency of advocates of “good design” to assign the role of villain alternately to the consumer, the retailer and the industry when debating why “good design” did not reign supreme, depending on the problem at hand. It is thus difficult to be conclusive about this complex controversy. However, the applied art community had a long-standing and persisting tradition of demonstrating ill faith in the will, power and agency of the consumer: When things were looking up, it was perceived as a result of the applied art movement’s successful propaganda work.

Attempts to meet the challenges posed by the expanding and fragmenting design field were made in the organizational sphere as well. The strategy, (re)organize to professionalize, was to be implemented by shifting the focus from educating the consumer to educating the designer. This entailed increased attention to the two classic features or devices appearing in most professionalisation processes: an influential trade organization, and improved education. Both these questions generated much dispute, turbulence and problems throughout the 1960s—in all fractions of the design community. The interior architects had gotten their trade organization in 1945, the industrial designers founded theirs in 1955, but as a means to strengthen or regenerate the lingering universalist ideals, a trade organization for all kinds of designers falling under the wide category applied art was set up in 1963. A decade later, this one ended up as the domain of an even more “artified” handicraft scene, and thus only consolidated the fragmentation it was intended to curtail. In 1965, the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) was reorganized and became an umbrella organization coordinating the various trade organizations. This move can be

seen as an attempt at *clearing the agenda* and maintaining order and discipline in the community. Another organizational attempt at *clearing the agenda* for a different kind of and differently situated design discourse was the establishment of the Norwegian Design Centre (Norsk Designcentrum). Founded in 1963 by institutions outside the design community (the Norwegian Export Council (Norges Eksportråd) and the Federation of Norwegian Industries (Norges Industriforbund)), this organization moved design considerably from the cultural sphere into the fiscal sphere, and represents an increased acknowledgment of industrial design in both industrial and governmental circles.

Probably the most radical interpretation of the events of the 1960s an attempt at *clearing the agenda* is the emerging campaign for a design for the real world. It is perhaps misleading to think of this trend as a campaign, because the contributions were far from coherent and came in many shapes and sizes. But in the course of the decade, various voices, for various reasons, began questioning the designers' responsibility in the consumer society and requesting a debate on material culture and design for the real world. In an ever more affluent society, designers were accused of unscrupulously serving the profit greed of industry and commerce and of having lost all sense of professional ethics and social responsibility. A very different, but also fascinating take on the newfound concern for the contextual morality and responsibility of design was the growing propaganda for the use of indigenous materials. In short, many and different arguments were made that design had to be emancipated from the allure of licentious consumer society and/or high-brow culture and restored as a way of solving "real" problems for "real" people living in the "real" world.

It was not just the message that underwent some drastic changes in the late 1960s; so did the media. In the course of the last couple of years of the decade, *Bonytt* was radically transformed from an arena for fervent advocacy and professional debate to a forum for inspiration and friendly advice. In 1970, the close ties to the National Federation Norwegian Applied Art (Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst) was severed, leaving *nye bonytt* completely free from organizational affiliations and ideological regulations. And when the founding father Arne Remlov stepped down after three decades as editor, he was literally *clearing the agenda* for a new era. Both in terms of production and publication, the new magazine was far more commercialized than the old. As the 1960s ebbed out, *Bonytt* went from belief to business.

All these different and diverging debates on design ideology going on in *Bonytt* in the 1960s, characterized by various courses of fragmentation, offshoots, specialisation and professionalisation, thus reflect a more and more explicit attempt at *reconfiguring design cultures*. Although its manifestation is somewhat different, this process was mirrored in design practice as well. The manufactured goods industry, its market, market and design strategies, and consequently industrial design practice as a whole experienced comprehensive changes in the 1960s when faced with the consumer society and the brave, new world of international free trade. As an actor on this scene, Figgjo had no choice but to relate to these circumstances, and they did so by *clearing the table* for a new position, taking the first but crucial steps from being a generalist domestic actor to becoming a specialist international actor.

In a world of international free trade, Figgjo immediately understood that they could not be biggest or cheapest, and thus could not survive offering “something for everyone”. Their response was to try to become smarter, more effective and more targeted. The primary means to this goal was to redirect the market and product strategy through curtailment and cultivation. The product portfolio was getting out of hand, and had to be drastically reduced to obtain a more rational, flexible and targeted production. Even products that still sold well in the domestic market, like the most popular and profitable models in traditionalistic design, were dropped because they did not have any export potential.

Figgjo was thus literally *clearing the table* for a new design profile dominated by a few new basic models which all had a distinctly modern but still rather moderate formal expression. As opposed to the most popular modern models of the 1950s, the new ones were all kept in white, and served as the “canvas” for a wide variety of decors. By letting their new service models fade to white, Figgjo established a new basis for a more rational product differentiation. The many decors offered on these new models for the private household market in the 1960s can broadly be described through three categories: abstract patterns, figurative/naturalistic floral designs, and folkloristic/rustic motifs. The first category can be seen as a successful solution to the eternal challenge of how to indulge the designers’ own preferences for modern design without alienating the average consumer. Offering figurative/naturalistic floral decors on these new, modern models seems to have been an attempt at catering to the many customers who had bought the now discontinued traditionalistic models. The folkloristic/rustic motifs on the other hand, can be interpreted as an attempt to inscribe the modern model designs with more explicit emotional functionality through an overlay of familiarity, naturalness, sentimentality and joyfulness.

This latter search for a third way—for a design that was both modern and popular without resorting to compromise—can be understood as a way of using decor design to domesticate modern model design. Figgjo’s new response to the challenge of putting an acceptable and attractive face of modernism took two interesting turns: one group of decor designs best characterized as folklorica, and one more along the lines of rustic or psychedelic motifs. These two trajectories make use of very different design expressions, from the meticulous line drawings of the narrative tableaus to the intense patterns of the rustic and psychedelic motifs. What they have in common, though, is a striking exuberance in their formal language. Moreover, both these trajectories represent the more clever versions of the strategy of domesticating modern design by using expressive decor.

In the 1960, Figgjo offered a vast array of decors on a relatively few service models. The logic behind this strategy was that Figgjo now operated in a market where international competition was so hard that a curtailed and rational production was essential to survive—but so was catering to the consumers’ diverse preferences and seemingly unending desire for emotional functionality. Figgjo chose to resolve this paradox of diversification by rationalizing and moderating the product design, making the modern designs of their service models more harmless or “tame” and at the same time playing out the flexible and expressive decor design.

The single most important decision made at Figgjo in the 1960s was when they in 1962 began *clearing the table* in hotels, restaurants, canteens and other commercial kitchens and institutional households. The *Hotel China* represented a step in a new direction both in terms of market strategy, product technology and design. The vast expansion of public administration and services combined with the growth in industrial development as well as in private investment and consumption during the 1950s had generated a considerable market potential for such products. Catering to the professional market did not only require a markedly different market strategy; as far as Figgjo was concerned, it also required completely new solutions in terms of technology and design. Earthenware would not be strong enough for such products, so Figgjo spent a lot of time and money developing a new material quality: vitreous china. The virtues of the vitreous china constituted a sort of material morals that became the tenet of the inscription of scientificity and rationality in this product.

The design of the new products in vitreous china was also portrayed as the result of a process just as rational, deductive, logical and scientific as the development of the new material. In the name of utilitarian functionality, a number of unconventional design solutions—all emphasising ease of stacking, flexibility and multifunctionality—characterize the design of Figgjo's hotel china series. And this image of functional perfection constructed around the product alluded strongly to notions of scientific rationality, downplaying the aesthetic aspects of design.

Despite all the rhetorics of rationality surrounding the hotel china, decor design would prove highly important with this product as well. First of all, not even professional purchasers were not considered to be *absolutely* rational decision-makers. The product and its design was intentionally presented as scientific and rational—but then also ran the risk of being perceived as impersonal and “wild”. Attractive decors, then, could make up the “irrational” element in these negotiations, as a means to “tame” the form. An even more important argument in this respect was the ability to offer custom-made decors—a sort of artistic “tailoring” on an industrial “off-the-rack” product. As the 1960s became the 1970s, the decor design offered on the hotel china and the product image in general took a decidedly more trend conscious direction. This scientific wonder, this product of the laboratory was now enwrapped in the most fashionable colours of the day and accompanied by trendy accessories and more explicitly emotional arguments. In short, the hotel china was renegotiated by means of trends taming technology.

This particular product did not only set off a new trajectory for the company—one that would even prove to be its road to redemption—it was also *clearing the table* for a new and alternative design paradigm challenging the ethos of the so-called Scandinavian Design. The Figgjo hotel china represented a distinct break with the applied art tradition that underpinned what must still be called the reigning design paradigm in Norway at the time, based as it was on a design ideology best characterized as *scientific operationalism*—a concept normally associated with German industrial design and particularly the Ulm School of Design. Thus, the hotel china series represented a fundamental reorientation for Figgjo, both in terms of design strategy, design ideology and design practice.

The design discourse that had been constructed in the 1940s was now spreading out in many directions, establishing more or less autonomous sub-discourses. The design networks that had been negotiated and kept together in the 1950s were now breaking up and renegotiated in new constellations. As it should be clear now, these developments pertain both to ideology and practice, that mutually constitute the dynamic transformation of culture. In short, then, the 1960s was a time for *reconfiguring design cultures*.

21.6 Conclusion: Modern Transformed

The primary ambition of this study has been to trace the domestication of industrial design culture in Norway in the mid-twentieth century, thus showing how the ideas of what modern design is or should be was transformed through space and time. As mentioned above, this period is particularly interesting because the dynamics of historical change become quite dramatic and distinct. In the course of a few decades, the grand project of modernity went from being at its peak to becoming troublesome. Likewise, the overarching ideology of modernism slowly changed from being a more or less unquestioned *episteme* into a more brittle and fragmented world view. As part of these broader shifts, modernist design ideology and modern design practice also underwent significant transformations. In the course of the three decades covered here, Norwegian design went from facing the challenges of wartime damages and shortages to those presented by the affluent society and cultural radicalism. In coping with these transformations, designers were recast from agents of moral and physical reconstruction to agents of cultural and commercial reconfiguration. At the same time, modern design—at least as construed by the design community—went from being a rather exotic and acquired taste in most sectors of the Norwegian manufactured goods industry to becoming more of a compulsory element and strategic tool in product development. Thus, both in content and in comprehension, we have seen *modern transformed*.

In this study we have seen how the design community in mid-twentieth century Norway domesticated ideologies partly inherited from the traditional applied art movement (*brukskunstbevegelsen*) and partly imported from various international currents of the so-called “modern movement”. This discourse, as played out in the leading design magazine *Bonytt*, constitutes the first site of domestication. But the domestication of industrial design culture in Norway does not end with the writings of campaigning designers, enthusiastic journalists, ardent academics and organisation men. Accordingly, we have also seen how the Norwegian manufactured goods industry, here represented by the ceramic tableware manufacturer Figgjo, in their turn domesticated these ideas and ideals of modern design and thus represents a second site of domestication where the ideologies undergo new negotiations and transformations in the meeting with other users, requirements and circumstances.

The first phase of the period discussed here was dubbed *constructing design discourse* in order to reflect some of its key characteristics. Ideas and ideals of modern

design did of course predate 1940, but the subsequent years saw the emergence of a much more systematic and comprehensive articulation of design as a professional domain. The establishment of *Bonytt* provided the design community with a continuous and congruous arena for debate, as well as with a vehicle for propaganda towards a wider interested public. At the same time, new developments in the manufactured goods industry, here exemplified by the business start-up at Figgjo, also contributed to the construction of a design discourse through their design practice. A combination of unfavorable external circumstances and unsettled internal concerns made for rather crude construction: The design discourse of this phase must be said to have been rather tentative in character, with actors seeking common ground, searching for identities, trying to find forms.

The middle phase has been labelled *negotiating design networks* as a way of emphasizing the work that was required in maintaining and developing the momentum and influence that was achieved in this period. As both the design community and the manufactured goods industry were expanding their networks, they also experienced that more and more translational work had to be done in order to avoid or at least mitigate fragmentation and breakaways. The enrollment of new actors and allies meant expansion and increased influence, but also greater heterogeneity and complexity in the networks. Still, this phase represents the Norwegian design community at its height in terms of breadth, coherence and self-esteem as well as a time of growth and prosperity for Norwegian manufactured goods industry and a moment when Figgjo enjoyed a place in the sun.

The last phase is called *reconfiguring design cultures*, signifying the many ways in which controversies now arose or augmented beyond repair and resulted in readjustments, realignments and reorganizations of design and its cultures. The days of a unitary and unifying project were ending. The different groupings of design practitioners grew more and more specific and distinct. Central tenets of the modernist design ethos were challenged by some and abandoned by others. The role of design in a consumer society was questioned in some circumstances and exploited in others. The industry found new ways of configuring their design strategies and practices in order to manage the transition to the brave, new world of international free trade. Towards the end of this period *Bonytt* was transformed from an arena for professional debate into a forum for advice on interior decoration, and Figgjo went from offering “something for everyone” in the domestic market to designing more targeted products for international niche markets.

We thus left off the two sites of domestication in a state very different from where we picked them up. Likewise, we have observed comprehensive transformations in the ideas and ideals of modern design that have passed through both sites. Modern industrial design was largely a promising potentiality in Norway in 1940, brimming with visions of progress and prosperity, and had become an widely implemented but increasingly troublesome reality in 1970. Considering “design as a material practice of Modernity” - as the British design historian Judy Attfield proposes—reveals to us a design history that is “untidy, disordered and undisciplined in its forms, expressive of the complex problems of adapting to Modernity.”² We have seen *modern transformed*.

This study has been an attempt at writing a cultural history of industrial design, where design (as) culture is seen as a sort of dialectic or discourse between ideology and practice. This often uneasy but always reciprocal relation between design ideology and design practice can be said to comprise the *leitmotif* of the study. The combination of both discrepancies and correlations we have seen in the relationship between the ideological design culture articulated through *Bonytt* and the practical/commercial design culture articulated through Figgjo's strategies and products illustrates one of the most interesting sides to studying industrial design: the constant negotiations between theory and practice, culture and commerce, morality and materiality, the ideal and the real.

2. Judy Attfield, "Fascinating fitness: the dangers of good design" in Judy Attfield, *Bringing Modernity Home—Writings on Popular Design and Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) p 39

Sources

Periodicals

Bonytt: Vol.1 (1941) - Vol. 31 (1972).

Various other magazines and numerous newspapers have been used sporadically.

Archives

Figgjo AS company archive.

Norwegian Design Council (Norsk Designråd) archive

Norwegian Industrial Designers (Norske Industridesignere - NID) archive

Norsk Møbelfaglig Senter archive

Informants

Rolf Frøyland

Jan Gauguin

Viggo B. Heirung

Roar Høyland

Sonja Johnsson

Grete Prytz (Korsmo) Kittelsen

Jørg Løve Nielsen

Turid Gramstad Oliver

Thorbjørn Rygh

Transcribed interviews

Interviews conducted by Eldar Høidal with the following persons:

[Transcripts kept at Norsk Møbelfaglig Senter archive]

Birger Dahl (18.02.1998)

Bernt Heiberg (20.02.1998)

Arne Remlov (04.11.1996)

Alf Sture (19.09.1997)

Anne Lise Aas (17.09.1996)

Bibliography

- Adams, Douglas. *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe: The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy 2* (London: Pan Books, 1980)
- Adorno, Theodor. "Functionalism Today" [essay presented to the Deutscher Werkbund conference in 1965] reprinted in Leach, N. (ed.). *Rethinking Architecture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997)
- Adorno, Theodor. *Prisms* [1955] (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983)
- Adorno, Theodor and Horkheimer, Max. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1947] (New York: Continuum, 1972)
- Agnew, Kenneth. "The Spitfire: Legend or History? An Argument for a New Research Culture in Design" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993
- Akrich, Madeleine. "User Representations: Practices, Methods and Sociology" in Rip, A., Misa, T.J. and Schot, J. (eds.). *Managing Technology in Society. The Approach of Constructive Technology Assessment* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995)
- Akrich, Madeleine. "The De-description of Technological Objects" in Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (eds.). *Shaping Technology / Building Society—Studies in sociotechnical change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992)
- Akrich, Madeleine and Latour, Bruno. "A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies" in Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (eds.). *Shaping Technology / Building Society. Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992)
- Alnæs, Tormod (ed.). *Vårt daglige miljø 1918-1978* (Oslo: Landsforbundet norsk brukskunst, 1978)
- Altern, Ingeborg Dobloug and Pedersen, Halvor (eds.). *Hjemmet og vi—en bok om liv og arbeid* (Oslo: Norsk faglitteratur—G. Reinert, 1955)
- Amdam, R.P., Gjestland, D. and Hompland, A. (eds.). *Årdal—Verket og bygda 1947-1997* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1997)
- Amdam, R.P., Hanisch, T.J. and Pharo, I.E. *Vel blåst!—Christiania Glasmagasin og norsk glassindustri 1739-1989* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1989)
- Ames, Kenneth L. "Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter" [book review] in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000
- Amundsen, Otto Delphin (ed.). *Vi fra NTH—De neste ti kull: 1920-1929* (Oslo: Dreyer, 1950)
- Andersen, Håkon W. "Taylor, Ford og den rasjonelle fabrikken" in Andersen, H.W., Borgersen, T., Brandt, T., Eliassen, K.O., Stugu, O.S. and Øfsti, A. (eds.). *Fabrikken* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2004)
- Andersen, H.W., Borgersen, T., Brandt, T., Eliassen, K.O., Stugu, O.S. and Øfsti, A. (eds.). *Fabrikken* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2004)
- Anker, Peter, et al. *Norsk brukskunst* (Oslo: Dansk-norsk fond, 1969)
- Anker, Peter. *Norsk brukskunst 1966—keramikk, tekstil, sølv, glass, møbler, porselen, industrial design* (Bergen: Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1966)
- Appadurai, Arjun (ed.). *The Social Life of Things—Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)
- Appleby, J., Hunt L. and Jacob, M. *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994)
- Ask, Trygve. *God Norsk Design—Konstitueringen av industridesign som profesjon i Norge* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitekturhøgskolen i Oslo, 2004)
- Atkinson, Paul. "Man in a Briefcase: The Social Construction of the Laptop Computer and the

- Emergence of a Type Form” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2005
- Atkinson, Paul. “The (In)Difference Engine—Explaining the Disappearance of Diversity in the Design of the Personal Computer” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000
- Attfield, Judy. *Bringing Modernity Home—Writings on Popular Design and Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)
- Attfield, Judy. “Material Culture in the Social World” [book review] in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2002
- Attfield, Judy. *Wild Things—The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2000)
- Attfield, Judy. “Beyond the Pale: Reviewing the Relationship between Material Culture and Design History” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1999
- Attfield, Judy (ed.). *Utility Reassessed—The Role of Ethics in the Practice of Design* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
- Attfield, Judy. “Good Design by Law: Adapting Utility Furniture to Peacetime Production: Domestic Furniture in the Reconstruction Period 1946-56” in Maguire, P.J. and Woodham, J.M. (eds.). *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain: Britain Can Make it Exhibition of 1946* (London: Leicester University Press, 1998)
- Attfield, Judy. “‘Give ‘em something dark and heavy’: The Role of Design in the Material Culture of Popular British Furniture, 1939-1965” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 9, No. 3, 1996
- Attfield, Judy. “FORM/female FOLLOWS FUNCTION/male: Feminist Critiques of Design” in Walker, John A. *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989)
- Aynsley, Jeremy and Berry, Francesca. “Introduction: Publishing the Modern Home—Magazines and the Domestic Interior 1870-1965” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2005
- Baker, Nicholson. *The Mezzanine* [1988] (London: Granta, 1998)
- Balcioglu, Tevfik (ed.). *The Role of Product Design in Post-Industrial Society* (Ankara & Fort Pitt: METU Faculty of Architecture Press & Kent Institute of Art & Design, 1998)
- Banham, Reyner. “A throw-away aesthetic” in Banham, R. and Sparke, P. (ed.). *Design by Choice* (London: Academy Editions, 1981)
- Banham, Reyner and Sparke, Penny (ed.). *Design by Choice* (London: Academy Editions, 1981)
- Banham, Reyner. *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: Architectural Press, 1960)
- Barnes, Barry. “Thomas Kuhn” in Skinner, Q. (ed.). *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
- Barnes, Barry. *T. S. Kuhn and Social Science* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies* (London: Paladin, 1973)
- Batchelor, Ray. “Not looking at kettles” in Pearce, S.M. (ed.). *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon, 1964)
- Baudrillard, Jean. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* [1972] (St. Louis, Mont.: Telos, 1981)
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Consumer Society* [1970] (London: Sage, 1998)
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The System of Objects* [1968] (London and New York: Verso, 1996)
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995)

- Beer, Eileen Harrison. *Scandinavian Design: Objects of a Life Style* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975)
- Bendtsen, Steen Ory. *Nora Gulbrandsen—design for Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik 1927-1937* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2001)
- Benhamou, Reed. "Journal of Design History, Vol. 1, nos. 1-4." [Review] in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1991
- Benson, John. "Working-Class Consumption, Saving, and Investment in England and Wales, 1851-1911" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1996
- Benton, Tim. "The Myth of Function" in Greenhalgh, P. (ed.). *Modernism in Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990)
- Berg, K., Anker, P., Palme, P. and Tschudi-Madsen, S. (eds.). *Norges kunsthistorie* Vol. 6-7 (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1983)
- Berg, K., Tschudi-Madsen, S., et al. (eds.). *Norsk kunstnerleksikon* Vol. 1-4 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1982-1986)
- Berker, T., Hartmann, M., Punie Y. and Ward, K.J. (eds.). *Domestication of Media and Technology* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006)
- Berlandi, F., Fratino, L. and Freyrie, E. "Mostra del mobile singolo" in Lombardo, I.M., et al. (eds.). *Catalogo della Decima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1954)
- Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air—The Experience of Modernity* (London & New York: Verso, 1983)
- Berre, Nina. *Fysiske idealer i norsk arkitekturutdanning 1945-1970* [Doctoral dissertation] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2002)
- Bertens, Hans. *The Idea of the Postmodern—A History* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Bertheau, Øistein. "Troll—egentlig en Gutbrod" in Bertheau, Ø. and Stokke, C. (eds.). *Made in Norway? Historien om forsøk på bilproduksjon i Norge* (Oslo: Norsk Teknisk Museum, 1991)
- Bertheau, Øistein and Stokke, Christian (eds.). *Made in Norway? Historien om forsøk på bilproduksjon i Norge* (Oslo: Norsk Teknisk Museum, 1991)
- Betts, Paul. *The Authority of Everyday Objects—A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)
- Betts, Paul. "The Bauhaus and National Socialism—a Dark Chapter of Modernism" in Fiedler, J. and Feierabend, P. (eds.). *Bauhaus* (Köln: Könemann, 1999)
- Betts, Paul. "Science, Semiotics and Society: The Ulm Hochschule für Gestaltung in Retrospect" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1998
- Biernacki, Richard. "Method and Metaphor After the New Cultural History" in Bonnell, V.E. and Hunt, L. (eds.). *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999)
- Bijker, Wiebe E. *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs—Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995)
- Bijker, Wiebe E. and Law, John. "What Next? Technology, Theory, and Method" in Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (eds.). *Shaping Technology / Building Society—Studies in sociotechnical change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992)
- Bijker, Wiebe E. and Law, John. (eds.). *Shaping Technology / Building Society. Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992)
- Bijker, Wiebe E. "The Social Construction of Bakelite: Toward a Theory of Invention" in Bijker, W.E.,

- Hughes, T.P. and Pinch, T.J. (eds.). *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987)
- Bijker, W.E., Hughes, T.P. and Pinch, T.J. (eds.). *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987)
- Bing, Morten. *Østkanthjemmene og østkantutstillingen—Boskikk og boligidealer i mellomkrigstidens Oslo* (Oslo: Norsk folkemuseum, 2001)
- Bjørneboe, Jens. *Vi som elsket Amerika—Essays om stormaktsgalskap, straffelyst, kunst og moral* (Oslo: Pax, 1970)
- Bjørneboe, Jens. *Norge, mitt Norge—Essays om formyndermennesket* (Oslo: Pax, 1968)
- Blake, Peter. *Form Follows Fiasco—Why Modern Architecture Hasn't Worked* (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1974)
- Blaszczyk, Regina Lee. *Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000)
- Blaszczyk, Regina Lee. "Cinderella Stories—The Glass of Fashion and the Gendered Marketplace" in Horowitz, R. and Mohun, A. (eds.). *His and Hers—Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998)
- Bloor, David. "Anti-Latour" in *Studies In History and Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1999
- Bongard, H., Himberg-Larsen, R. and Wildhagen, F. (eds.). *Nordisk kunsthåndverk og design* (Oslo: Landsforbundet norsk brukskunst, 1981)
- Bonnell, Victoria E. and Hunt, Lynn (eds.). *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999)
- Bonnell, Victoria E. *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997)
- Bonsiepe, Gui. "Developing Countries: Awareness of Design and the Peripheral Condition" in Pirovano, C. (ed. in chief). *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 3: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design* (Milano: Electa, 1990)
- Bonta, Juan Pablo. *Architecture and its Interpretation—A Study of Expressive Systems in Architecture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1979)
- Boudon, Philippe. *Lived-In Architecture—Le Corbusier's Pessac Revisited* (London: Lund Humphries, 1972)
- Buol, Cornelia von. "The Ceramics Workshop" & "Japan and the Bauhaus Pottery" in Fiedler, J. and Feierabend, P. (eds.). *Bauhaus* (Köln: Könemann, 1999)
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Wacquant, Loic J. D. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* [1979] (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984)
- Brandt, Thomas. *Frie hjerter og små motorer. Kulturell produksjon, formidling og bruk av den italienske Vespa-scooteren, 1946-1969* [Doctoral dissertation] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2006)
- Brandt, Thomas. "La Vespa negli Stati Uniti: il trasporto culturale di una merce italiana" in *Memoria e Ricerca*, Vol. 14, No. 23, 2006
- Branzi, Andrea. *Introduzione al design italiano—una modernità incompleta* (Milano: Baldini & Castoldi, 1999)
- Branzi, Andrea. *Learning From Milan—Design and the Second Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT

- Press, 1988)
- Brekke, N.G., Nordhagen, P.J. and Lexau, S.S. *Norsk arkitekturhistorie* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 2003)
- Bristol, Katharine G. "The Pruitt-Igoe myth" in Eggener, K.L. (ed.). *American Architectural History—A Contemporary Reader* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004)
- Brochmann, Odd. *Rent Bord—En historie om funksjonalismen og funksjonalistene i Norge* (Oslo: Arkitektnytt, 1987)
- Brochmann, Odd. "Til brukskunstens fremme" in Schjødt, L. (ed.). *Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—Årbok 1964* (Oslo: Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1964)
- Brochmann, Odd. *Om hus og land og menig mann* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1956)
- Brochmann, Odd. *En bok om stygt og pent: som handler om tingenes form, vesen og innhold, og om det inntrykk de gjør på oss* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1953)
- Brochmann, Odd. *Livsform og boligform* (Oslo: Oslo byes vel / Tanum, 1952)
- Brochmann, Odd (ed.). *Mennesker og boliger—familieundersøkelsens resultater—Oslo byes vel's boligundersøkelse* (Oslo: Oslo byes vel / Tanum, 1948)
- Brolin, Brent C. *Architectural Ornament—Banishment and Return* [Revised edition of *Flight of Fancy*, 1.ed. 1985] (London: W.W. Norton, 2000)
- Brown, Bill. "Thing Theory" in Brown, B. (ed.). *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)
- Brown, Bill (ed.). *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)
- Brown, Kenneth D. "Design in the British Toy Industry Since 1945" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1998
- Brown, Steven D. and Capdevila, Rose. "Perpetuum mobile: substance, force and the sociology of translation" in Law, J. and Hassard, J. (eds.). *Actor Network Theory and After* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999)
- Brunnström, Lasse. "Från konst och teknik till industriell design" in Brunnström, L. (ed.). *Svensk industridesign: en 1900-talshistoria* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1997)
- Brunnström, Lasse (ed.). *Svensk industridesign: en 1900-talshistoria* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1997)
- Brønne, J. Bøe, E.T. and Skjerven, A. *Arne Korsmo—Arkitektur og design* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2004)
- Buckley, Cheryl. "Design, Femininity, and Modernism: Interpreting the Work of Susie Cooper" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 1994
- Buckley, Cheryl. "'The Noblesse of the Banks': Craft Hierarchies, Gender Divisions, and the Roles of Women Paintresses and Designers in the British Pottery Industry 1890-1939" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 1989
- Buckley, Cheryl. "Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1986
- Burton, Anthony. "Design History and the History of Toys: Defining a Discipline for the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1997
- Butenschøn, P., Dahl, B.M. and Halén, W. (eds.). *...bare plast?!—Revolusjon i design* (Oslo: Messel, 1995)
- Bøe, Alf (ed.). *Tias Eckhoff—en pionér i norsk industridesign* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1998)
- Bøe, Alf. *Nora Gulbrandsen på Porsgrund* (Oslo: Huitfeldt, 1994)

- Bøe, Alf. "Kunstindustri og industridesign etter 1940" in Berg, K., Anker, P., Palme, P. and Tschudi-Madsen, S. (eds.). *Norges kunsthistorie* Vol. 7 (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1983)
- Bøe, Alf. "Kunsthåndverk og kunstindustri 1914-1940" in Berg, K., Anker, P., Palme, P. and Tschudi-Madsen, S. (eds.). *Norges kunsthistorie* Vol. 6 (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1983)
- Bøe, Alf. *Den norske Designpris de syv første år / The Norwegian Design Award its first seven years* (Oslo: Norsk Designcentrum, 1969)
- Bøe, Alf. *Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik—Bedrift og produksjon gjennom åtti år, 1885-1965* (Porsgrund & Oslo: Porsgrunds Porselænsfabrik & J. Grundt Tanums forlag, 1967)
- Bøe, Alf. *Norsk/Norwegian Industrial Design* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo / Tanum, 1963)
- Bøgh, Christen Gran, et al. (eds.). *Landsutstillingen i Bergen 1928: Reiseliv, sport, hotellvesen, husflid, brukskunst: Beretning* (Bergen: Grieg, 1929)
- Bø-Rygg, Arnfinn. *Modernisme, antimodernisme, postmodernisme – Kritiske streiftog i samtidens kunst og kunstteori* (Stavanger: Høgskolen i Stavanger, 1995)
- Bø-Rygg, Arnfinn. "What modernism was—Art, progress and the avant-garde" in Hvattum, M. and Hermansen, C. (eds.). *Tracing Modernity—Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Calabrese, Omar. *L'età neobarocca* (Bari: Laterza, 1987)
- Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987)
- Callon, Michel. "Society in the Making: The Study of Technology as a Tool for Sociological Analysis" in Bijker, W.E., Hughes, T.P. and Pinch, T.J. (eds.). *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987)
- Callon, M., Law, J. and Rip, A. (eds.). *Mapping the Dynamics of Science and Technology—Sociology of Science in the Real World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986)
- Calvera, Anna. "Local, Regional, National, Global and Feedback: Several Issues To Be Faced With Constructing Regional Narratives" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2005
- Calvino, Italo. *Le città invisibili* (Torino: Einaudi, 1972)
- Campbell, Colin. "Consumption and the Rhetorics of Need and Want" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998
- Carlson, W. Bernard. "Artifacts and Frames of Meaning: Thomas A. Edison, His Managers, and the Cultural Construction of Motion Pictures" in Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (eds.). *Shaping Technology / Building Society—Studies in sociotechnical change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992)
- Castelnuovo, Enrico. "For a History of Design" in Pirovano, C. (ed. in chief). *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 1: 1750-1850 The Age of the Industrial Revolution* (Milano: Electa, 1990)
- Castelnuovo, Enrico and Gubler, Jacques. "The Mysterious Object—Notes on the Historiography of Design" in Pirovano, C. (ed. in chief). *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 3: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design* (Milano: Electa, 1990)
- Catterall, Claire. "Perceptions of Plastics: A Study of Plastics in Britain, 1945-1956" in Sparke, P. (ed.). *The Plastics Age—From Bakelite to Beanbags and beyond* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1993)
- Celant, Germano (ed.). *Architecture & Arts: 1900/2004—A Century of Creative Projects in Building, Design, Cinema, Painting, Sculpture* (Milan: Skira, 2004)
- Clarke, Alison J. "The Aesthetics of Social Aspiration" in Miller, D. (ed.). *Home Possessions—Material Culture Behind Closed Doors* (Oxford: Berg, 2001)

- Clarke, Alison J. *Tupperware: The Promise of Plastic in 1950s America* (Washington & London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999)
- Clarke, Alison J. "Window shopping at home: classifieds, catalogues and new consumer skills" in Miller, D. (ed.). *Material cultures—Why some things matter* (London: UCL Press, 1998)
- Clarke, Sally. "Managing Design: The Art and Colour Section at General Motors, 1927-1941" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1999
- Clarke, Sally. "Consumer Negotiations" in *Business and Economic History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1997
- Clayhills, Harriet. "Lunningprisen og de norske prisvinnere" in Schjødt, L. (ed.). *Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—Årbok 1964* (Oslo: Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1964)
- Clayhills, Harriet. *33 brukskunstnere / 33 Norwegian designers* (Oslo: Bonytt Forlag, 1959)
- Collins, Peter. *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture: 1750-1950* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965)
- Conekin, Becky E. *The Autobiography of a Nation: The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)
- Constant, Edward W. *The Origins of the Turbojet Revolution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980)
- Conway, Hazel. "Design History Basics" in Conway, H. (ed.). *Design History—A Student's Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987)
- Conway, Hazel (ed.). *Design History—A Student's Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987)
- Corn, Joseph J. "Object Lessons/Object Myths? What Historians of Technology Learn from Things" in Kingery, W.D. (ed.). *Learning From Things—Method and Material of Material Culture Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996)
- Coupland, Douglas. *Generation X* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991)
- Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. *A Social History of American Technology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. "The Consumption Junction: A Proposal for Research Strategies in the Sociology of Technology" in Bijker, W.E., Hughes, T.P. and Pinch, T.J. (eds.). *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987)
- Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. *More Work for Mother—The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983)
- Crowley, David. "Building the World Anew: Design in Stalinist and Post-Stalinist Poland" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1994
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Rochberg-Halton, Eugene. *The Meaning of Things—Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)
- Cumming, Elizabeth. "Studios, Education and Industry" in Cumming, E. and Kaplan, W. (eds.). *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991)
- Cumming, Elizabeth and Kaplan, Wendy (eds.). *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991)
- Cummings, Neil and Lewandowska, Marysia. *The Value of Things* (London/Basel: August/Birkhäuser, 2000)
- Cutcliffe, Stephen H. and Post, Robert C. (eds.). *In Context—History and the History of Technology* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 1989)
- Dahl, Helmer and Svendsen, Arnljot Strømme. *Vebjørn Tandberg: triumf og tragedie* (Bergen:

- Fagbokforlaget, 1995)
- Dahl, T.E., Ellefsen, T. and Solberg, A. *Hallo?!—Norges telefonhistorie* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1993)
- Dammann, Erik. *The Future in Our Hands* [1972] (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979)
- Daston, Lorraine (ed.). *Things That Talk—Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004)
- Davies, Kevin. “Marketing Ploy or Democratic Ideal?” in Halén, W. and Wickman, K. (eds.). *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003)
- Davies, Kevin. “Scandinavian Furniture in Britain: Finmar and the UK Market, 1949-1952“ in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1997
- DeLillo, Don. *Underworld* (New York: Scribner, 1997)
- Dilnot, Clive. “The State of Design History, Part I” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1984
- Dilnot, Clive. “The State of Design History, Part II” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1984
- Doordan, Dennis P. “Promoting Aluminum: Designers and the American Aluminum Industry” in Doordan, D.P. (ed.). *Design History—An Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995)
- Doordan, Dennis P. (ed.). *Design History—An Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995)
- Doordan, Dennis P. “Political Things: Design in Fascist Italy” in Kaplan, W. (ed.). *Designing Modernity—The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995)
- Doordan, Dennis P. “On History” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995
- Dorfles, Gillo. “Introduzione” in Pansera, A. (ed.). *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L’Arca, 1988)
- Dorfles, G., Rosselli, A., Zanuso, M., et al. (eds.). “Mostra Internazionale dell’”Industrial Design”” in Lombardo, I.M., et al. (eds.). *Catalogo della Undecima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1957)
- Dormer, Peter (ed.). *The Culture of Craft* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997)
- Dormer, Peter. *Design Since 1945* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993)
- Dormer, Peter. *The Meanings of Modern Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990)
- Douglas, Mary and Isherwood, Baron. *The World of Goods—Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (London: Allen Lane, 1979)
- Draper, Peter (ed.). *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)
- Droste, Magdalena. *Bauhaus 1919-1933* (Köln: Taschen, 1990)
- During, Simon (ed.). *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)
- Dysthe, Trinélise. “Tilbake til fremtiden. Form gjennom tid—ord gjennom år” in Høidal, E. (ed.). *Et liv i form—hedersskrift for Inge Langlo* (Sykkylven: Norsk møbelfaglig senter, 2000)
- Edwards, Clive. “Aluminium Furniture, 1886-1986—The Changing Applications and Reception of a Modern Material” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2001
- Edwards, Steve. “Factory and Fantasy in Andrew Ure” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2001
- Eggebø, Aksel and Frafjord, Daniel. *Det begynte med leir—Leirindustriens historie på Sandnes gjennom 200 år* (Stavanger: Dreyer, 1987)

- Eggner, Keith L. (ed.). *American Architectural History—A Contemporary Reader* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004)
- Ekholm, K., Huldt, Å.H. and Stavenow, Å. *Jacob Prytz—12. juni 1886-1956* (Göteborg: Slöjdföreningens skola, 1956)
- Eliassen, Knut Ove and Brandt, Thomas (eds.). *Maskinkultur – Utsnitt fra fabrikkens tidsalder* (Trondheim: NTNU/Fabrikken, 2001)
- Ellefsen, T., Solberg, A. and Normann, C. *Telephones—telephones in Norway 1880-2000* (Oslo: Norwegian Telecom Museum, 2000)
- Elzinga, Aant. “Theoretical Perspectives: Culture as Resource for Technological Change” in Hård, M. and Jamison, A. (eds.). *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology—Discourses on Modernity, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998)
- Er, H. Alpay. “Development Patterns of Industrial Design in the Third World: A Conceptual Model for Newly Industrialized Countries” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997
- Eriksen, Tore. “Modernitet” in Eliassen, K.O. and Brandt, T. (eds.). *Maskinkultur – Utsnitt fra fabrikkens tidsalder* (Trondheim: NTNU/Fabrikken, 2001)
- Falconi, Laura. *Gio Ponti: Interni, oggetti, disegni. 1920-1976* (Milano: Electra, 2004)
- Faldbakken, Matias (under the pseudonym Abo Rasul). *The Cocka Hola Company—Skandinavisk misantropi* (Oslo: Cappelen, 2001)
- Fallan, Kjetil. “How an Excavator Got Aesthetic Pretensions—Negotiating Design in 1960s’ Norway” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2007
- Fallan, Kjetil. “Visionaries and Weathercocks—Norwegian Furniture Design c. 1920-1965” in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, 2003
- Fallan, Kjetil. *Shaping Sense—Italian post-war functionalistic design* [Master thesis] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2001)
- Ferguson, Eugene S. “Technical Journals and the History of Technology” in Cutcliffe, S.H. and Post, R.C. (eds.). *In Context—History and the History of Technology* (Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 1989)
- Feyerabend, Paul. “Consolations for the Specialist” in Lakatos, I. and Musgrave, A. (eds.). *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)
- Feyerabend, Paul. *Against Method—Outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge* (London: NLB, 1975)
- Fiedler, Jeannine and Feierabend, Peter (eds.). *Bauhaus* (Köln: Könemann, 1999)
- Fiell, Charlotte and Peter. *Scandinavian Design* (Köln & London: Taschen, 2002)
- Fiell, Charlotte and Peter. *Design of the 20th Century* (Köln: Taschen, 1999)
- Findal, Wenche. *Mellom tradisjon og modernitet—Arkitekt Ove Bang og den funksjonelle syntese* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo & Universitetsforlaget, 1998)
- Findal, Wenche. *Norsk modernistisk arkitektur—om funksjonalismen* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1996)
- Findal, Wenche. “Regionale forskjeller i funksjonalismen” in Forseth, T. (ed.). *Funksjonalismen i Norge* [yearbook] (Oslo: Fortidsminneforeningen, 1992) p 23–40
- Findeli, Alain. “Design History and Design Studies: Methodological, Epistemological and Pedagogical Inquiry” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995
- Fisher, Tom H. “What We Touch, Touches Us: Materials, Affects, and Affordances” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2004

- Flink, James J. *The Automobile Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988)
- Flor, Thomas. *Mørkets sans—Verner Pantons Astoria restaurant i Trondheim* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum, 2002)
- Flusser, Vilém. *The Shape of Things—A Philosophy of Design* (London: Reaktion, 1999)
- Forseth, Terje (ed.). *Funksjonalismen i Norge* [yearbook] (Oslo: Fortidsminneforeningen, 1992)
- Forty, Adrian. “DEBATE: A Reply to Victor Margolin” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993
- Forty, Adrian. *Objects of Desire—Design and Society Since 1750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986)
- Fossati, Paolo. *Il Design in Italia 1945-1972* (Torino: Einaudi, 1972)
- Foster, Hal (ed.). *The Anti-Aesthetic—Essays on Post-Modern Culture* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983)
- Foucault, Michel and Bouchardand, Donald F. (ed.). *Language, Counter-memory, Practice—Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977)
- Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972)
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things—An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1st. Engl. ed. 1970] (London: Routledge, 1989)
- Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture—A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980)
- Frankland, F., Hald, A., Johansson, G., and Lindgren, B.G. (eds.). *H55 Utställning i Hälsingborg 1955* (Hälsingborg: Hälsingborg Stad—Svenska Slöjdföreningen, 1955/1957)
- Friedel, Robert. “Some Matters of Substance” in Lubar, S. and Kingery, W.D. (eds.). *History From Things—Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993)
- Fritz, Bernd. “New impulses at Rosenthal: Loewy's designs for chinaware” in Schönberger, A. (ed.). *Raymond Loewy: Pioneer of American Industrial Design* (Munich: Prestel, 1990)
- Frobenius, Nikolaj. *Teori og praksis* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 2004)
- Fry, Tony. “A Geography of Power: Design History and Marginality” in Margolin, V. and Buchanan, R. (eds.). *The Idea of Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995) [Originally published in *Design Issues*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1989]
- Fry, Tony. *Design History Australia* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1988)
- Fry, Tony. “Unpacking the Typewriter” in *Block* No. 7, 1982
- Fry, Tony. “Design History: A Debate?” in *Block* No. 5, 1981
- Furre, Berge. *Norsk historie 1905-1990* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1992)
- Furuseth, S., Paulson, S.J. and Aaslestad, P. (eds.). *Saklighet og sanselighet. Norsk prosa-modernisme på 1930-tallet* (Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk, 2000)
- Fægri, Knut and Pijl, L. van der. *The Principles of Pollination Ecology* (Toronto: Pergamon, 1966)
- Fægri, Knut. “Naturvern i mange land” in *Naturen* No. 9, 1956
- Fægri, Knut. “Klimahistorie og arkeologi” in *Naturen* No. 10, 1942
- Galbraith, John K. *The Affluent Society* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958)
- Galison, Peter. “Image of Self” in Daston, L. (ed.). *Things That Talk—Object Lessons form Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004)
- Galison, Peter. *How Experiments End* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

- Gartman, David. "Harley Earl and the Art and Color Section: The Birth of Styling at General Motors" in Doordan, D.P. (ed.). *Design History—An Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995)
- Gartman, David. *Auto Opium—A Social History of American Automobile Design* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Garvey, Pauline. "How to Have a 'Good Home'—The Practical Aesthetic and Normativity in Norway" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 2003
- Gaustad, Randi and Danbolt, Gunnar. *Samtidskeramikk: Norsk keramikk fra 1940 til i dag* (Oslo: Dreyer, 1990)
- Gaustad, Randi. "Porsgrunds Porselen på utstilling" in Opstad, L., et al. (eds.). *Porsgrund Porselen 100 år* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo and Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1985)
- Gaustad, Randi. *Foreningen Brukskunst 1918-1930: Program, utstillinger og kritikk* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1973)
- Gay, P. du, Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H. and Negus, K. *Doing Cultural Studies—The Story of the Sony Walkman* (London: Sage, 1997)
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973)
- Gelfer-Jørgensen, Mirjam. "Has Design History anything to do with Art History?" in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, 2001
- Gelfer-Jørgensen, Mirjam (ed.). *Nordisk Funktionalisme 1925-1950* (København: Det danske Kunstindustrimuseum & Nordisk Forum for Formgivningshistorie, 1986)
- Georgiadis, Sokratis. *Sigfried Giedion: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989)
- Gerchuk, Iurii. "The Aesthetics of Everyday Life in the Khrushchev Thaw in the USSR (1954-64)" in Reid, S.E. and Crowley, D. (eds.). *Style and Socialism—Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000)
- Giedion, Sigfried. *Space, Time and Architecture: The growth of a new tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oxford University Press, 1949)
- Giedion, Sigfried. *Mechanization Takes Command—a contribution to anonymous history* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948)
- Glambek, Ingeborg. *Det Nordiske i arkitektur og design—sett utenfra* (Oslo: Arkitektens forlag and Norsk arkitekturforlag, 1997)
- Glambek, Ingeborg. "Scandinavian Design—En kortvarig affære?" in Halén, W. (ed.). *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996)
- Glennie, Paul. "Consumption Within Historical Studies" in Miller, D. (ed.). *Acknowledging Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Goldstein, Jan (ed.). *Foucault and Writing of History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994)
- Goodall, Philippa. "Design and Gender" in *Block* No. 9, 1983
- Gorman, Carma R. "Reshaping and Rethinking: Recent Feminist Scholarship on Design and Designers" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2001
- Grassi, Alfonso and Pansera, Anty. *L'Italia del design—Trent'anni di dibattito* (Casale Monferrato: Marietti, 1986)
- Graves, Jane. "'When Things Go Wrong... inside the inside': A Psychoanalytical History of a Jug" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1999
- Grazia, Victoria de (ed.). *The Sex of Things—Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*

- (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)
- Greenhalgh, Paul. *The Modern Ideal—The Rise and Collapse of Idealism in the Visual Arts* (London: V&A Publications, 2005)
- Greenhalgh, Paul (ed.). *The Persistence of Craft—The Applied Arts Today* (London: A & C Black, 2002)
- Greenhalgh, Paul (ed.). *Modernism in Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990)
- Greve, Knut. “Vår tids møbler” in Remlov, A. (ed.). *Utstillingen "12 riktige" på Nordre Åsen, Grefsen, Oslo, 20. mai—4. juni 1950: 12 møblerte leiligheter* (Oslo: LNB/OBOS, 1950)
- Grönholm, K., Kumela, M., Tamminen, M. and Koivisto, K. *Pöytä koreaksi—Katetun pöydän ja pöytätaipojen historia suomessa* (Helsinki, Tammi, 2005)
- Grønvold, Ulf (ed.). *Hundre års nasjonsbygging—Arkitektur og samfunn 1905-2005* (Oslo: Pax, 2005)
- Gullestad, Marianne. *Kitchen-table Society* [1984] (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001)
- Gullestad, Marianne. *The Art of Social Relations: Essays on Culture, Social Action and Everyday Life in Modern Norway* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1992)
- Gunnarsjaa, Arne. *Arkitekturleksikon* (Oslo: Abstrakt, 1999)
- Guttu, Jon. “Den gode boligen”—*Fagfolks oppfatning av boligkvalitet gjennom 50 år* [doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitektthøgskolen i Oslo, 2003)
- Guyatt, Mary. “Better Legs: Artificial Limbs for British Veterans of the First World War” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001
- Habermas, Jürgen. “Modernity—An Incomplete Project” in Foster, H. (ed.). *The Anti-Aesthetic—Essays on Post-Modern Culture* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983)
- Hadjinicolaou, Nicos. *Art History and Class Struggle* (London: Pluto, 1978)
- Hagströmer, Denise. “An “Experiment’s” Indian Summer—The Formes Scandinaves Exhibition” in Halén, W. and Wickman, K. (eds.). *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003)
- Halén, Widar. “The Flow of Ideas USA—Scandinavia” in Halén, W. and Wickman, K. (eds.). *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003)
- Halén, Widar and Wickman, Kerstin (eds.). *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003)
- Halén, Widar. “Skumplasten—materialet som revolusjonerte norsk møbelindustri” in Haakestad, J. (ed.). *Design symbol stil—Kunst og industri i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Orfeus, 2000)
- Halén, Widar (ed.). *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996)
- Hannah, Fran and Putnam, Tim. “Taking Stock in Design History” in *Block* No. 3, 1980
- Hansen, Per H. “Networks, Narratives, and New Markets: The Rise and Decline of Danish Modern Furniture Design, 1930-1970” in *Business History Review*, Vol. 80, No. 3, 2006
- Hansen, Per H. *Da danske møbler blev moderne—Historien om dansk møbeldesigns storhedstid* (Odense & København: Syddansk Universitetsforlag & Aschehoug, 2006)
- Haraldsen, Ingunn. “Transport: Det mobile århundret” in Grønvold, U. (ed.). *Hundre års nasjonsbygging—Arkitektur og samfunn 1905-2005* (Oslo: Pax, 2005)
- Harris, Jonathan. *The New Art History—A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001)
- Haug, Wolfgang. *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in*

- Capitalist Society* [1971] (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986)
- Haugland, Henrik. *Muntre minner fra Fajansen* (Valle: Setesdalsforlaget, 1999)
- Hayward, Stephen. “‘Good design is largely a matter of common sense’: Questioning the Meaning and Ownership of a Twentieth-Century Orthodoxy” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998
- Hearn, Fil. *Ideas That Shaped Buildings* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003)
- Hebdige, Dick. *Hiding in the Light—On Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988)
- Hebdige, Dick. “Object as Image: The Italian Scooter Cycle” in *Block* No. 5, 1981
- Hennum, Gerd. *Maleren og glasskunstneren Arne Jon Jutrem* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1999)
- Henriksen, Petter, et al. (eds.). *Aschehoug og Gyldendals store norske leksikon* [3. ed.] (Oslo: Kunnskapsforlaget, 1995-1999) Vol. 7
- Herr, Jeffrey. *Reactionary Modernism—Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)
- Heskett, John. “Some lessons of design history” in Skjerven, A. (ed.). *Designkompetanse—Utvikling, forskning og undervisning* (Oslo: Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo, 2005)
- Heskett, John. “Design in Inter-War Germany” in Kaplan, W. (ed.). *Designing Modernity—The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995)
- Heskett, John. “Industrial Design” in Conway, H. (ed.). *Design History—A Student’s Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987)
- Heskett, John. *Industrial Design* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1980)
- Heskett, John. “Modernism and Archaism in the Third Reich” in *Block* No. 3, 1980
- Hidle, Jonas. “Bongard og glasset” in Opstad, L. (ed.). *Tegneren Hermann Bongard* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1971)
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence (eds.). *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
- Hodge, Brooke and Armi, C. Edson. *Retrofuturism—The Car Design of J Mays* (New York: Universe, 2002)
- Hodder, Ian. “Theoretical archaeology: a reactionary view” in Pearce, S.M. (ed.). *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Hodne, Fritz and Grytten, Ola Honningdal. *Norsk økonomi i det 20. århundre* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2002)
- Hodne, Fritz. *Norges økonomiske historie 1815-1970* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1981)
- Holm, Arne E. “Arbeidet med bokstav, bind og tegning” in Opstad, L. (ed.). *Tegneren Hermann Bongard* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1971)
- Horowitz, Roger and Mohun, Arwen (eds.). *His and Hers—Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998)
- Hubak, Marit. “The Car as a Cultural Statement” in Lie, M. and Sørensen, K.H. (eds.). *Making Technology Our Own?—Domesticating Technology into Everyday Life* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996)
- Hughes, Thomas P. *Human-Built World—How to think about technology and culture* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2004)
- Hughes, Thomas P. “Edison and electric light” in MacKenzie, D. and Wajcman, J. (eds.). *The Social Shaping of Technology* [2. ed.—first published 1985] (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1999)

- Hughes, Thomas P. *American Genesis—A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm, 1870-1970* (New York: Viking, 1989)
- Hughes, Thomas P. “The Evolution of Large Technological Systems” in Bijker, W.E., Hughes, T.P. and Pinch, T.J. (eds.). *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987)
- Hughes, Thomas P. “The Seamless Web: Technology, Science, Etcetera, Etcetera” in *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1986
- Hughes, Thomas P. *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983)
- Huldt, Åke H. “The Lunning Prize and Nordic collaboration after World War II” in Lutteman, H.D. and Uggla, M. (eds.). *The Lunning Prize* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1986)
- Huldt, Åke H. “Industrial design” in Krohn-Hansen, T. (ed.). *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1951* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1952)
- Hunt, Lynn (ed.). *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1989)
- Hutchby, Ian. “Technologies, Texts and Affordances” in *Sociology*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2001
- Hvattum, Mari. “Historisme og modernisme i moderne arkitekturhistorieskriving” in *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2006
- Hvattum, Mari and Hermansen, Christian (eds.). *Tracing Modernity—Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Høidal, Eldar. “Kreativ, tolmodig og allsidig” in Tandstad, K. (ed.). *Årbok for Sykkylven 2004* (Sykkylven: Sykkylven sagemnd, 2004)
- Høidal, Eldar (ed.). *Et liv i form—hederskrift for Inge Langlo* (Sykkylven: Norsk møbelfaglig senter, 2000)
- Høidal, Eldar. *Hov Dokka—en Riise i norsk møbelindustri* (Sykkylven: Norsk møbelfaglig senter, 1997)
- Høisæther, Ole Rikard. *Design på norsk—Fra Nøstetangen til Norway Says* (Oslo: Damm, 2005)
- Hølaas, Odd. “Norsk brukskunst—En introduksjon” in Remlov, A., et al. (eds.). *Norsk brukskunst 1951—utstilling i Röhsska konstslöjdmuseet, Göteborg; Det Danske Kunstindustrimuseum, København*. (Oslo: LNB, 1951)
- Haakestad, Jorunn (ed.). *Design symbol stil—Kunst og industri i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Orfeus, 2000)
- Hård, Mikael and Jamison, Andrew. *Hubris and Hybrids—A Cultural History of Technology and Science* (New York: Routledge, 2005)
- Hård, Mikael. “German Regulation: The Integration of Modern Technology into National Culture” in Hård, M. and Jamison, A. (eds.). *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology—Discourses on Modernity, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998)
- Hård, Mikael and Jamison, Andrew (eds.). *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology—Discourses on Modernity, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998)
- Hård, Mikael. “Beyond Harmony and Consensus: A Social Conflict Approach to Technology” in *Science, Technology and Human Values*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1993
- Iggers, Georg G. *Historiography in the Twentieth Century—From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1997)
- Ingram, J., Shove, E. and Watson, M. “Products and Practices: Selected Concepts from Science and Technology Studies and from Social Theories of Consumption and Practice” in *Design Issues*, Vol.

- 23, No. 2, 2007
- Ivanov, Gunnela. "Den besjälade industrivaran—Idéerna kom från Tyskland" in Wickman, K. (ed.). *Formens rörelse—svensk form genom 150 år* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1995)
- Jackson, Andrew. "Labour as Leisure—The Mirror Dinghy and DIY Sailors" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2006
- Jackson, Frank. "The New Air Age: BOAC and Design Policy 1945-60" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1991
- Jackson, Lesley. *The New Look—Design in the Fifties* (London & New York: Thames & Hudson, 1991)
- Jackson, Simon. "Sacred Objects—Australian Design and National Celebrations" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 2006
- Jackson, Simon. "The "Stump-jumpers:" National Identity and the Mythology of Australian Industrial Design in the Period 1930-1975" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2002
- Jacob, Margaret C. "Science Studies after Social Construction—The Turn toward the Comparative and the Global" in Bonnell, V.E. and Hunt, L. (eds.). *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999)
- Jacobsen, K., Andersen, K.G., Halvorsen, T. and Myklebust, S. "Engineering Cultures: European Appropriations of Americanism" in Hård, M. and Jamison, A. (eds.). *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology—Discourses on Modernity, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998)
- Jasanoff, S., Markle, G.E., Petersen, J.C. and Pinch T. (eds.). *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (Thousand Oaks & London: Sage, 1995)
- Jencks, Charles A. *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1978)
- Jensen, Hans-Christian. *Fra velfærd til designkultur—Velfærdsengagementet i dansk designteori og designpraksis i det 20. århundrede* [Doctoral dissertation] (Odense: Syddansk Universitet, 2005)
- Joa, Olav. "Fra tørket leire til brent vitroporselen" in Rosenberg, U.-E. (ed.). *Figgjo—formet av entusiasme i 60 år: 1941-2001* (Figgjo: Figgjo AS, 2001)
- Johannessen, Wenche Anette. *Brukskunst-senteret PLUS—Per Tannums ønske om å etablere et designsentrum* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000)
- Johansson, Gotthard. "Design in Scandinavia" in Remlov, A. (ed.). *Design in Scandinavia—An exhibition of objects for the home* (Oslo: Kirstes, 1954)
- Johnson, Dag. *Den første doktorpromosjon ved Universitetet i Trondheim, 2. september 1972* (Trondheim: UniT, 1973)
- Johnson, Philip (ed.). *Machine Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1934)
- Jones, Caroline A. "Talking Pictures: Clement Greenberg's Pollock" in Daston, L. (ed.). *Things That Talk—Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004)
- Jones, Mark. "Why fakes?" in Pearce, S.M. (ed.). *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Jones, Michelle. "Design and the Domestic Persuader—Television and the British Broadcasting Corporation's Promotion of Post-war 'Good Design'" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2003
- Julier, Guy. "Barcelona Design, Catalonia's Political Economy, and the New Spain, 1980-1986" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1996

- Jørgensen, Finn Arne. *Tidens krav—Framveksten av det vitenskapelige husstellet i Norge 1900-1940* [Master thesis] (Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2002)
- Jøssang, Lars Gaute. *Industrieventyret på Jæren 1800-2000* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 2004)
- Kalha, Harri. ““Just One of Those Things”—The Design in Scandinavia Exhibition 1954-57” in Halén, W. and Wickman, K. (eds.). *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003)
- Kaplan, Wendy (ed.). *Designing Modernity—The Arts of Reform and Persuasion 1885-1945* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995)
- Kärholm, Mattias. *Arkitekturens territorialitet—till en diskussion om territoriell makt och gestaltning i stadens offentliga rum* [Doctoral dissertation] (Lund: LTH, Lunds Universitet, 2004)
- Katz, Barry M. “Intelligent Design” in *Technology and Culture* Vol. 47, No. 2, 2006
- Katz, Barry M. “Technology and Design: A New Agenda” in *Technology and Culture* Vol. 38, No. 2, 1997
- Kaufmann, Edgar. “Scandinavian Design in the U.S.A.” in Krohn-Hansen, T. (ed.). *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1953* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1954)
- Kelley, Victoria. “The Equitable Consumer: Shopping at the Co-Op in Manchester” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1998
- Kielland, Thor B. *Om gullsmedkunst i hundre år—J. Tostrup 1832-1932* (Oslo: Grøndahl, 1932)
- Kielland, Thor B. “Brukskunstavdelingen” in Bøgh, C.G., et al. (eds.). *Landsutstillingen i Bergen 1928: Reiseliv, sport, hotellvesen, husflid, brukskunst: Beretning* (Bergen: Grieg, 1929)
- Kingery, W. David (ed.). *Learning From Things—Method and Material of Material Culture Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996)
- Kingery, W. David. “Technological Systems and Some Implications with Regard to Continuity and Change” in Lubar, S. and Kingery, W.D. (eds.). *History From Things—Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993)
- Kinross, Robin (ed.). *Anthony Froshaug—Typography and Texts & Documents of a Life* (London: Hyphen Press, 2000)
- Kinross, Robin. “Herbert Read's "Art and Industry": A History” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1988
- Kirkham, Pat (ed.). *The Gendered Object* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996)
- Kjelland-Fosterud, Einar. “Den norske ELBIL” in Bertheau, Ø. and Stokke, C. (eds.). *Made in Norway? Historien om forsøk på bilproduksjon i Norge* (Oslo: Norsk Teknisk Museum, 1991)
- Klein, Naomi. *No Logo* (New York: Picador, 1999)
- Kline, Ronald and Pinch, Trevor. “Users as Agents of Technological Change: The Social Construction of the Automobile in the Rural United States” in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1996
- Koerner, Joseph Leo. “Bosch’s Equipment” in Daston, L. (ed.). *Things That Talk—Object Lessons form Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004)
- Koivisto, Kaisa. “Designers, Glass Makers and Rationalisation” in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, 2002
- Korsmo, Arne and Korsmo, Grete Prytz. “La Boutique Estetique [sic] et Technique [sic]” in Krohn-Hansen, T. (ed.). *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1957* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1958)
- Korsmo, Grete Prytz. “En kort fortelling om arbeidet med emalje fra årene etter 2den verdenskrig til

- den XI Triennale utstilling i Milano” in Krohn-Hansen, T. (ed.). *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1957* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1958)
- Korvenmaa, Pekka and Kodres, Krista (eds.). *Connecting: A Conference on the Multivocality of Design History & Design Studies* [ICDHS 5th conference proceedings] (Helsinki & Tallinn: University of Art and Design Helsinki & Estonian Academy of Arts, 2006)
- Kramer, Lloyd S. “Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra” in Hunt, L. (ed.). *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1989)
- Krohn-Hansen, Thorvald (ed.). *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1957* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1958)
- Krohn-Hansen, Thorvald (ed.). *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1953* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1954)
- Krohn-Hansen, Thorvald (ed.). *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1951* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1952)
- Kubler, George. *The Shape of Time—Remarks on the History of Things* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962)
- Kuhn, Thomas S. “Second Thoughts on Paradigms” in Suppe, F. (ed.). *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977)
- Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Essential Tension—Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977)
- Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* [2nd ed.] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970)
- Kumela, Marjut. “Suomalaisen kuokapöydän keramiika” in Grönholm, K., Kumela, M., Tamminen, M. and Koivisto, K. *Pöytä koreaksi—Katetun pöydän ja pöytätapojen historia suomessa* (Helsinki, Tammi, 2005)
- Kundera, Milan. *The unbearable lightness of being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984)
- LaCapra, Dominick. *History & Criticism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985)
- LaCapra, Dominick. *Rethinking Intellectual History—Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983)
- Lakatos, Imre (edited by Worrall, John and Currie, Gregory). *Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978)
- Lakatos, Imre and Musgrave, Alan (eds.). *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)
- Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark. *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980)
- Landström, Catharina. “National Strategies: The Gendered Appropriation of Household Technology” in Hård, M. and Jamison, A. (eds.). *The Intellectual Appropriation of Technology—Discourses on Modernity, 1900-1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998)
- Lantry, Douglas N. “Dress for Egress: The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum’s Apollo Spacesuit Collection” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001
- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social—An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004)
- Latour, Bruno. “On recalling ANT” in Law, J. and Hassard, J. (eds.). *Actor Network Theory and After*

- (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999)
- Latour, Bruno. "For Bloor and Beyond—A Reply to David Bloor's 'Anti-Latour'" in *Studies In History and Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1999
- Latour, Bruno. *Aramis, or The Love of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996)
- Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993)
- Latour, Bruno. "Where Are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artefacts" in Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (eds.). *Shaping Technology / Building Society—Studies in sociotechnical change* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992)
- Latour, Bruno (under the pseudonym Jim Johnson). "Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer" in *Social Problems*, Vol. 35, No. 3, June 1988
- Latour, Bruno. *Science in Action* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987)
- Law, John. *After Method—Mess in Social Science Research* (London: Routledge, 2004)
- Law, John. "After ANT: complexity, naming and topology" in Law, J. and Hassard, J. (eds.). *Actor Network Theory and After* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999)
- Law, John and Hassard, John (eds.). *Actor Network Theory and after* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999)
- Law, John. *Organizing Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994)
- Leach, Neil (ed.). *Rethinking Architecture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1997)
- Lees-Maffei, Grace. "Studying Advice: Historiography, Methodology, Commentary, Bibliography" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2003
- Lees-Maffei, Grace. "From Service to Self-Service—Advice Literature as Design Discourse, 1920-1970" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2001
- Lending, Mari. *Omkring 1900—Utkast til en arkitekturhistorisk topikk* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Arkitektur- og designhøgskolen i Oslo, 2005)
- Levy, Eugene. "The Aesthetics of Power: High-Voltage Transmission Systems and the American Landscape" in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1997
- Lexau, Siri Skjold. *Mind the Gap—Mellomposisjoner i samtidsarkitekturen* (Oslo: Akribes, 2000)
- Lie, Merete and Sørensen, Knut H. (eds.). *Making Technology Our Own?—Domesticating Technology into Everyday Life* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996)
- Lindblad, Thomas. *Bruksföremål av plast* (Lund: Signum, 2004)
- Lippe, Jens von der "Den allsidige Bongard" in Opstad, L. (ed.). *Tegneren Hermann Bongard* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1971)
- Lombardo, Ivan Matteo, et al. (eds.). *Catalogo della Dodicesima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1960)
- Lombardo, Ivan Matteo, et al. (eds.). *Catalogo della Undecima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1957)
- Lombardo, Ivan Matteo. "Proposti e realtà della Decima Triennale" in Lombardo, I.M., et al. (eds.). *Catalogo della Decima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1954)
- Lombardo, Ivan Matteo, et al. (eds.). *Catalogo della Decima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1954)
- Loos, Adolf. *Ornament and crime: selected essays* (Riverside, Ca.: Ariadne Press, 1998)
- Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

- Lubar, Steven. "Learning from Technological Things" in Kingery, W.D. (ed.). *Learning From Things—Method and Material of Material Culture Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996)
- Lubar, Steven. "Machine Politics: The Political Construction of Technological Artifacts" in Lubar, S. and Kingery, W.D. (eds.). *History From Things—Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993)
- Lubar, Steven and Kingery, W. David (eds.). *History From Things—Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993)
- Lutteman, Helena Dahlbäck and Ugglå, Marianne (eds.). *The Lunning Prize* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1986)
- Mácel, Otakar. "Avant-Garde Design and the Law: Litigation over the Cantilever Chair" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 3, No. 2/3, 1990
- MacKenzie, Donald and Wajcman, Judy (eds.). *The Social Shaping of Technology* [2. ed.—first published 1985] (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 1999)
- MacKenzie, Donald. "Missile Accuracy: A Case Study in the Social Processes of Technological Change" in Bijker, W.E., Hughes, T.P. and Pinch, T.J. (eds.). *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987)
- Madge, Pauline. "Design, Ecology, Technology: A Historiographical Review" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1993
- Madge, Pauline. "An Enquiry into Pevsner's "Enquiry"" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1988
- Maguire, Patrick J. and Woodham, Jonathan M. (eds.). *Design and Cultural Politics in Postwar Britain: Britain Can Make it Exhibition of 1946* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997)
- Maguire, Paddy. "Craft Capitalism and the Projection of British Industry in the 1950s and 1960s" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1993
- Maguire, Paddy. "Designs on Reconstruction: British Business, Market Structures and the Role of Design in Post-War Recovery" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1991
- Mahrt, Haakon Bugge. *Kjære Europa: to fortellinger* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1932)
- Mahrt, Haakon Bugge. *Modernisme* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1931)
- Maldonado, Tomás. "Taking Eyeglasses Seriously" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2001
- Maldonado, Tomás. "New Developments in Industry and the Training of Designers" in *Architects' Yearbook*, Vol. 9, 1960
- Malterud, Nina and Ylvisåker, Anne Britt (eds.). *Burning Point Bergen—Ceramics 1950-2000* (Bergen: Kunsthøgskolen i Bergen and Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, 2002)
- Mannila, Leena (ed.). *God form i Norge—Jacob-prisens vinnere 1957-1995* (Oslo: Norsk Form / Messel, 1996)
- Mannila, Leena. "Det er vårt bord" in Opstad, L., et al. (eds.). *Porsgrund Porselen 100 år* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo and Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1985)
- Marcus, George H. *Design in the Fifties—When Everyone Went Modern* (Munich/New York: Prestel, 1998)
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Kultur und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1965)
- Margolin, Victor. "A World History of Design and the History of the World" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005

- Margolin, Victor. *The Politics of the Artificial* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001)
- Margolin, Victor and Buchanan, Richard (eds.). *The Idea of Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995)
- Margolin, Victor. "A Reply to Adrian Forty" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995
- Margolin, Victor. "Design history or design studies: subject matter and methods" in *Design Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1992
- Margolin, Victor (ed.). *Design Discourse: History, theory, criticism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1989)
- Masterman, Margaret. "The Nature of a Paradigm" in Lakatos, I. and Musgrave, A. (eds.). *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)
- Mazzanti, Davide (ed.). *Vespa—Un'avventura Italiana nel mondo* (Firenze: Giunti, 2003)
- McDonald, Gay. "Selling the American Dream: MoMA, Industrial Design and Post-War France" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2004
- McDonald, Terrence. "What We Talk about When We Talk about History: The Conversations of History and Sociology" in McDonald, T. (ed.). *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996)
- McDonald, Terrence (ed.). *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996)
- McKellar, Susie. "'Seals of Approval'—Consumer Representation in 1930s' America" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2002
- Megill, Allan. "The Reception of Foucault by Historians" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 48, No. 1, 1987
- Meikle, Jeffrey L. *Design in the USA* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Meikle, Jeffrey L. "Material Virtues: on the Ideal and the Real in Design History" in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 11, No. 3, 1998
- Meikle, Jeffrey L. *American Plastic—A Cultural History* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1995)
- Meikle, Jeffrey L. "Design History for What?: Reflections on an Elusive Goal" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995
- Meikle, Jeffrey L. "Into the Fourth Kingdom: Representations of Plastic Materials, 1920-1950" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1992
- Meikle, Jeffrey L. *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1979)
- Menna, Filiberto "Avanguardia e Protodesign" in Pansera, A. (ed.). *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988)
- Michael, Vincent. "Reyner Banham: Signs and Designs in the Time Without Style" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2002
- Michl, Jan. "On Seeing Design as Redesign—An Exploration of a Neglected Problem in Design Education" in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, 2002
- Michl, Jan. "Form Follows WHAT?—the modernist notion of function as a *carte blanche*" in *1:50—Magazine of the Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning* [Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa] No. 10, 1995

- Michl, Jan. "On the Rumor of Functional Perfection" in *Pro Forma* (Oslo: SHKS) No. 2, 1990-1991
- Michl, Jan. "Is there a duty to be modern?" in Pansera, A. (ed.). *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988)
- Miller, Daniel (ed.). *Home Possessions—Material Culture Behind Closed Doors* (Oxford: Berg, 2001)
- Miller, Daniel (ed.). *Car Cultures* (Oxford: Berg, 2001)
- Miller, Daniel. "Why some things matter" in Miller, D. (ed.). *Material cultures—Why some things matter* (London: UCL Press, 1998)
- Miller, Daniel. "Coca-Cola: a black sweet drink from Trinidad" in Miller, D. (ed.). *Material cultures—Why some things matter* (London: UCL Press, 1998)
- Miller, Daniel (ed.). *Material cultures—Why some things matter* (London: UCL Press, 1998)
- Miller, Daniel. "The Myths of Consumption" in Miller, D. (ed.). *Acknowledging Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Miller, Daniel (ed.). *Acknowledging Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1995)
- Miller, Daniel. "Things ain't what they used to be" in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Miller, Daniel. *Material Culture and Mass Consumption* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987)
- Mohun, Arwen P. "Designed for Thrills and Safety: Amusement Parks and the Commodification of Risk, 1880-1929" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2001
- Monö, R., Dahlin, T. and Sjöholm, H. "Industridesignern organiserar sig" in Brunnström, L. (ed.). *Svensk industridesign: en 1900-talshistoria* (Stockholm: Prisma, 1997)
- Morello, Augusto. "Mostra dell'Industrial Design" in Lombardo, I.M., et al. (eds.), *Catalogo della Decima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1954)
- Moriarty, Catherine. "A Backroom Service?—The Photographic Library of the Council of Industrial Design, 1945-1965" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000
- Mumford, Lewis. *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1934)
- Munch, Anders V. "Throughout any Scale" in *Scandinavian Journal of Design History*, Vol. 14, 2004
- Munch, Anders V. *Den stilløse stil: Adolf Loos* (Copenhagen: Kunstakademiets Arkitektskoles forlag, 2002)
- Murphie, Andrew and Potts, John. *Culture & Technology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003)
- Muthesius, Hermann. *Stilarkitektur og bygningsarkitektur—arkitekturens og haandverkets skiftende former i det nittende aarhundrede samt deres nuværende standpunkt* [Transl. by Henrik August Grosch] [1902] (Kristiania: Cammermeyer, 1909)
- Muthesius, Stefan. "We Do Not Understand What Is Meant by a "Company" Designing': Design versus Commerce in Late Nineteenth-Century English Furnishing" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1992
- Myerson, Jeremy. "Things to Enjoy: Reassessing Craft and Design Objects in an Age of Technology" in Balcioglu, T. (ed.). *The Role of Product Design in Post-Industrial Society* (Ankara & Fort Pitt: METU Faculty of Architecture Press & Kent Institute of Art & Design, 1998)
- Mykle, Agnar. *Lasso rundt fru Luna* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1954)
- Myklebust, Sissel. "Flukt og motstand—Outsidere, konsumkritikk og karakterdannelse rundt 1960" in Myrvang, C., Myklebust, S. and Brenna, B. *Temmet eller uhemmet—Historiske perspektiver på konsum, kultur og dannelse* (Oslo: Pax, 2004)

- Myklebust, Sissel. "Farlig kunnskap? Manipulasjon, kommunikasjon og livsstil" in Myrvang, C., Myklebust, S. and Brenna, B. *Temmet eller uhemmet—Historiske perspektiver på konsum, kultur og dannelse* (Oslo: Pax, 2004)
- Myrstad, Anne Marit. "You, Me and the Housework. Discussion of the Housewife film's Compère" in *Nordicom Review*, 25/2004
- Myrvang, Christine. "Fra knapphet til overflod—Jakten på det rasjonelle massekonsumet" in Myrvang, C., Myklebust, S. and Brenna, B. *Temmet eller uhemmet—Historiske perspektiver på konsum, kultur og dannelse* (Oslo: Pax, 2004)
- Myrvang, C., Myklebust, S. and Brenna, B. *Temmet eller uhemmet—Historiske perspektiver på konsum, kultur og dannelse* (Oslo: Pax, 2004)
- Myrvang, Christine. "Tingenes uutholdelige døgnvillhet: Design og konsum i maskinalderen" in Weium, F. (ed.). *Volund 2002* (Oslo: Norsk teknisk museum, 2002)
- Nader, Ralph. *Unsafe at any Speed—The designed-in dangers of the American automobile* (New York: Grossman, 1965)
- Narotzky, Viviana. "'A Different and New Refinement'—Design in Barcelona, 1960-1990" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2000
- Naylor, Gillian. "Good design in British industry 1930-1956" in Draper, P. (ed.). *Reassessing Nikolaus Pevsner* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)
- Naylor, Gillian. "Theory and Design: The Banham Factor: The Ninth Reyner Banham Memorial Lecture" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997
- Naylor, Gillian. "Great Britain: Theoriticians, Industry and the Craft Ideal" in Pirovano, C. (ed. in chief). *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 2: 1851-1918 The Great Emporium of the World* (Milano: Electa, 1990)
- Nicols, Sarah (ed.). *Aluminum by Design* (Pittsburgh/New York: Carnegie Museum of Art/Abrams, 2000)
- Nielsen, Nils-Fredrik. *Ekte sekstiåttre spiser ikke seipanetter—portretter fra 68-generasjonens indre og ytre liv* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1984)
- Nielssen, Einar. "Norvegia" in Lombardo, I.M., et al. (eds.), *Catalogo della Undecima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1957)
- Nierop, O.A. van, Blankendaal, A.C.M. and Overbeeke, C.J. "The Evolution of the Bicycle: A Dynamic Systems Approach" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1997
- Nilsen, Tove. *Skyskraperengler* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1982)
- Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *The functionalist Arne Korsmo* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1986)
- Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius loci: paesaggio, ambiente, architettura* (Milano: Electa editrice, 1979)
- Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Architettura occidentale: architettura come storia di forme significative* (Milano: Electa Editrice, 1974)
- Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Intentions in architecture* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1963)
- Norman, Donald A. *Emotional Design—Why we love (or hate) everyday things* (New York: Basic Books, 2004)
- Norman, Donald A. *The Design of Everyday Things* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998)
- Nydal, Rune. *I vitenskapens tid—Introduksjon til vitenskapsfilosofi etter Kuhn* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2002)
- Nygaard, Erik. "Arkitekturteorien—mellem manifeste og videnskab" in *Nordic Journal of*

- Architectural Research*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2002
- O'Brien, Patricia. "Michel Foucault's History of Culture" in Hunt, L. (ed.). *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1989)
- Oldenziel, R., Bruhèze, A.A. de la, and Wit, O. de. "Europe's Mediation Junction: Technology and Consumer Society in the 20th Century" in *History and Technology*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2005
- Oldenziel, Ruth. "Object/ions—Technology, Culture, and Gender" in Kingery, W.D. (ed.). *Learning From Things—Method and Material of Material Culture Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996)
- Olsen, Bjørnar. "Material Culture after Text: Re-Membering Things" in *Norwegian Archaeological Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2003
- Omtvedt, Elen. *Interiørarkitekt Alf Sture—En ener i norsk designhistorie* (Oslo: Designscandinavia, 2001)
- Opstad, Jan-Lauritz. *En ny bevissthet—norsk kunsthåndverk 1970-1990* (Oslo: Huitfeldt, 1989)
- Opstad, Jan-Lauritz. *Grete Prytz Kittelsen—emaljekunst og design* (Oslo : Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1978)
- Opstad, Jan-Lauritz. *David-Andersen: 100 år i norsk gullsmedkunst—gullsmedkunst og stilhistorie 1876-1976* (Oslo: David-Andersen & Kunstindustrimuseet, 1976)
- Opstad, Lauritz, et al. (eds.). *Porsgrund Porselen 100 år* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo and Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1985)
- Opstad, Lauritz (ed.). *Tegneren Hermann Bongard* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1971)
- Orwell, George. *Animal Farm: A fairy story* [1945] (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951)
- Oudshoorn, Nelly and Pinch, Trevor (eds.). *How Users Matter—The Co-Construction of Users and Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003)
- Pacey, Philip. "Anyone Designing Anything? Non-Professional Designers and the History of Design" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1992
- Packard, Vance. *The Naked Society* (London: Longmans, 1964)
- Packard, Vance. *The Waste Makers* (New York: McKay, 1960)
- Packard, Vance. *The Status Seekers* (New York: McKay, 1959)
- Packard, Vance. *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: McKay, 1957)
- Palmer, R.R. and Colton, Joel. *A History of the Modern World* [8. ed.] (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995)
- Pansera, Anty. *Storia del Disegno Industriale Italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1993)
- Pansera, Anty (ed.). *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988)
- Pansera, Anty. *Storia e cronaca della Triennale* (Milano: Longanesi, 1978)
- Pantzar, Mika. "Domestication of Everyday Life Technology: Dynamic Views on the Social Histories of Artifacts" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1997
- Papanek, Victor. *Design for the Real World: Human ecology and social change* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971)
- Papanek, Victor. *Miljön och miljonerna: design som tjänst eller förtjänst?* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1970)
- Parmann, Øistein. *Tegneskolen gjennom 150 år* (Oslo: Statens håndverks- og kunstindustriskole, 1970)

- Parr, Joy. *Domestic Goods—The Material, the Moral and the Economic in the Postwar Years* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999)
- Parr, Joy. “Shopping for a Good Stove—A Parable about Gender, Design, and the Market” in Horowitz, R. and Mohun, A. (eds.). *His and Hers—Gender, Consumption, and Technology* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998)
- Pasca, Vanni and Trabucco, Francesco (eds.). *Design: Storia e Storiografia* (Bologna: Progetto Leonardo, 1995)
- Patton, Phil. *Bug—The Strange Mutations of the World's Most Famous Automobile* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003)
- Paule, Solveig. *Boligsak er hovedsak—Boligidealer i etterkrigstiden eksemplifisert med utstillingen "12 riktige"* [Master thesis] (Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen, 2002)
- Paulsson, Gregor. *Vackrare Vardagsvara* (Stockholm: Svenska Slöjdföreningen, 1919)
- Pearce, Susan M. “Objects as meaning; or narrating the past” in Pearce, S.M. (ed.). *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Pearce, Susan M. “Thinking about things” in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Pearce, Susan M. (ed.). *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Pearce, Susan M. (ed.). *Museum Studies in Material Culture* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1989)
- Perniola, Mario. *Enigmi—il momento egizio nella società e nell'arte* (Genova: Edizioni Costa & Nolan, 1990)
- Petroski, Henry. *The Evolution of Useful Things* [Org. publ. 1992] (New York: Vintage Books, 1994)
- Petroski, Henry. *The Pencil—A History of Design and Circumstance* (New York: Knopf, 1989)
- Petroski, Henry. *To Engineer Is Human—The Role of Failure in Successful Design* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985)
- Pevsner, Nikolaus. *Pioneers of Modern Design—From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (2. ed.) (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1949)
- Pevsner, Nikolaus. *An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937)
- Pickering, Andrew. *The Mangle of Practice—Time, Agency, and Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)
- Pinch, Trevor J. and Bijker, Wiebe E. “The Social Construction of Facts and Artifacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other” in Bijker, W.E., Hughes, T.P. and Pinch, T.J. (eds.). *The Social Construction of Technological Systems—New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987)
- Pirovano, Carlo (ed. in chief). *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 1-3*: (Milano: Electa, 1990)
- Popper, Karl. *Objective Knowledge—An Evolutionary Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972)
- Popper, Karl. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959)
- Porter, Glenn. “Cultural Forces and Commercial Constraints: Designing Packaging in the Twentieth-Century United States” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1999
- Prytz, Jacob and Kielland, Thor. “Beretning of Nye Hjem utstillingen” in Prytz, J., et al. (eds.). *Foreningen Brukskunst Aarbok 1920*, [yearbook] (Kristiania: Foreningen Brukskunst & Kirstes boktrykkeri, 1921)

- Prytz, Jacob. "Industri, håndverk og brukskunst" in Prytz, J., *et al.* (eds.). *Foreningen Brukskunst Aarbok 1920*, [yearbook] (Kristiania: Foreningen Brukskunst & Kirstes boktrykkeri, 1921)
- Prytz, Jacob, *et al.* (eds.). *Foreningen Brukskunst Aarbok 1920*, [yearbook] (Kristiania: Foreningen Brukskunst & Kirstes boktrykkeri, 1921)
- Purbrick, Louise. "The Dream Machine: Charles Babbage and His Imaginary Computers" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1993
- Pursell, Carroll. "Seeing the Invisible: New Perspectives in the History of Technology." *ICON*, Vol. 1, 1995
- Putnam, Tim. "The Theory of Machine Design in the Second Industrial Age" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1988
- Pye, David. *The Nature and Aesthetics of Design* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1978)
- Raizman, David and Gorman, Carma R. (eds.). *Objects, Audiences, and Literatures—Alternative Narratives in the History of Design* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007)
- Raizman, David. *History of Modern Design—Graphics and Products since the Industrial Revolution* (London: Laurence King, 2003)
- Ramskjær, Liv. "Users and Producers of Plastics in Post-World War II Norway—Building a New Industry Through Transfer of Technology" in *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society*, Vol. 3, No.1, 2005
- Ramskjær, Liv. "Plast i det moderne Norge—Introduksjon, gjennombrudd og spredning av plastprodukter i Norge 1930-1974" in Weium, F. (ed.). *Volund 1999-2000—Plast i det moderne Norge* (Oslo: Norsk teknisk museum, 2001)
- Reid, Susan E. and Crowley, David (eds.). *Style and Socialism—Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 2000)
- Reigstad, Bjørn Erik. "Willy Johansson—Scandinavian Design i norsk glass" in Halén, W. (ed.). *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996)
- Remlov, Arne (ed.). *Design in Scandinavia—An exhibition of objects for the home* (Oslo: Kirstes, 1954)
- Remlov, Arne, *et al.* (eds.). *Norsk brukskunst 1951—utstilling i Röhsska konstslöjdmuseet, Göteborg; Det Danske Kunstindustrimuseum, København.* (Oslo: LNB, 1951)
- Remlov, Arne (ed.). *Utstillingen "12 riktige" på Nordre Åsen, Grefsen, Oslo, 20. mai—4. juni 1950: 12 møblerte leiligheter* (Oslo: LNB/OBOS, 1950)
- Riccini, Raimonda. "Innovation as a Field of Historical Knowledge for Industrial Design" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2001
- Riccini, Raimonda. "History From Things: Notes on the History of Industrial Design" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1998
- Rinde, Harald. "Den lange ventetida" in Amdam, R.P., Gjestland, D. and Hompland, A. (eds.). *Årdal—Verket og bygda 1947-1997* (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1997)
- Rip, A., Misa, T.J. and Schot, J. (eds.). *Managing Technology in Society. The Approach of Constructive Technology Assessment* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995)
- Ritzer, George. *Toward an integrated sociological paradigm: the search for an exemplar and an image of the subject matter* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1981)
- Rolness, Kjetil. *Med smak skal hjemmet bygges—innredning av det moderne norge* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995)
- Rolness, Kjetil. *Vulgær og vidunderlig—En studie i utsøkt dårlig smak* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1992)

- Romsaas, Jan. *Norsk Designråd—Arkivprosjektet 2003—Sluttrapport* [Unpublished report] (Oslo: Norsk Designråd, 2003)
- Romsaas, Jan. *Thorbjørn Rygh og hans rolle i bakgrunnen for, og opprettelsen av Industridesignerutdannelsen i Oslo* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2000)
- Rose, Sonya O. “Cultural Analysis and Moral Discourses—Episodes, Continuities, and Transformations” in Bonnell, V.E. and Hunt, L. (eds.). *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999)
- Rosenberg, Ulf-E. (ed.). *Figgjo—Formet av entusiasme gjennom 60 år, 1941-2001* (Figgjo: Figgjo AS, 2001)
- Rubin, Eli. “The Form of Socialism without Ornament—Consumption, Ideology, and the Fall and Rise of Modernist Design in the German Democratic Republic” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2006
- Rudofsky, Bernard. *Architecture Without Architects: a short introduction to non-pedigreed architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1964)
- Rygh, Thorbjørn. “Amerikansk Form” in Krohn-Hansen, T. (ed.). *Nordenfjeldske kunstindustrimuseum—Årbok 1953* (Trondheim: Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1954)
- Sachs, Wolfgang. *For Love of the Automobile—Looking Back into the History of Our Desires* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992)
- Schaffer, Simon. “A Science Whose Business Is Bursting: Soap Bubbles as Commodities in Classical Physics” in Daston, L. (ed.). *Things That Talk—Object Lessons from Art and Science* (New York: Zone Books, 2004)
- Scheffler, Israel. *Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967)
- Schiffer, Michael Brian. “Pathways to the Present—In Search of Shirt-Pocket Radios with Subminiature Tubes” in Kingery, W.D. (ed.). *Learning From Things—Method and Material of Material Culture Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996)
- Schiffer, Michael Brian. “Cultural Imperatives and Product Development: The Case of the Shirt-Pocket Radio” in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1993
- Schjødt, Liv (ed.). *Norsk kunsthåndverk—Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst ved 50-årsjubiléet 1968* (Oslo: Bonytt/LNB, 1968)
- Schjødt, Liv. “Industrial Design i norsk brukskunst” in Schjødt, L. (ed.). *Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—Årbok 1964* (Oslo: Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1964)
- Schjødt, Liv (ed.). *Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst—Årbok 1964* (Oslo: Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst, 1964)
- Schjødt, Liv. *God form er best i bruk* (Oslo: NKL forlaget, 1956)
- Schjødt, Liv (ed.). *Boligsak er hovedsak* (Oslo: Cappelen, 1950)
- Schnapp, Jeffrey T. “The Romance of Caffeine and Aluminum” in Brown, B. (ed.). *Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)
- Schnitler, Carl W. “Nye Hjem utstillingen—Den nye tid og den nye stil” in Prytz, J., et al. (eds.). *Foreningen Brukskunst Aarbok 1920*, [yearbook] (Kristiania: Foreningen Brukskunst & KIRSTES boktrykkeri, 1921)
- Schot, Johan and Bruheze, Adri Albert de la. “The Mediated Design of Products, Consumption, and Consumers in the Twentieth Century” in Oudshoorn, N. and Pinch, T. (eds.). *How Users Matter—The Co-Construction of Users and Technology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003)

- Schönberger, Angela (ed.). *Raymond Loewy: Pioneer of American Industrial Design* (Munich: Prestel, 1990)
- Scott, Katie. "Art and Industry—A Contradictory Union: Authors, Rights and Copyrights during the *Consulat*" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2000
- Seddon, Jill. "The Architect and the 'Arch-Pedant': Sadie Speight, Nikolaus Pevsner and 'Design Review'" in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2007
- Segelcke, Nanna. *Made in Norway* (Oslo: Dreyer, 1990)
- Segerstad, Ulf Hård af, et al. (eds.). *Design in Scandinavia* (Stockholm: Victor Pettersons Bokindustri AB, 1968)
- Sejersted, Francis. *Sosialdemokratiets tidsalder—Norge og Sverige i det 20. århundre* (Oslo: Pax, 2005)
- Selkurt, Claire. "Design for a Democracy—Scandinavian design in Postwar America" in Halén, W. and Wickman, K. (eds.). *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003)
- Selle, Gert. "There is No Kitsch, There is Only Design!" in *Design Issues* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1984
- Selle, Gert. *Die Geschichte des Design in Deutschland von 1870 bis heute—Entwicklung der industriellen Produktkultur* (Köln: DuMont, 1978)
- Selle, Gert. *Ideologie und Utopie des Design: zur gesellschaftlichen Theorie der industriellen Formgebung* (Köln: DuMont, 1973)
- Sewell jr., William. "The Concept(s) of Culture" in Bonnell, V.E: and Hunt, L. (eds.). *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999)
- Shakespeare, William. *The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare* (London: Chansellor Press, 1993)
- Sheridan, Michael. *Room 606—The SAS House and the Work of Arne Jacobsen* (London: Phaidon, 2003)
- Silow, Sven. "H55—med ansiktet vänt mot framtiden" in Wickman, K. (ed.). *Formens rörelse—svensk form genom 150 år* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1995)
- Silverstone, Roger. "Domesticating domestication. Reflections on the life of a concept" in Berker, T., Hartmann, M., Punie Y. and Ward, K.J. (eds.). *Domestication of Media and Technology* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006)
- Silverstone, R., Hirsch, E. and Morley, D. "Information and Communication Technologies and the Moral Economy of the Household" in Silverstone, R. and Hirsch, E. (eds.). *Consuming Technologies. Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*. (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Silverstone, Roger and Hirsch, Eric (eds.). *Consuming Technologies. Media and Information in Domestic Spaces*. (London: Routledge, 1992)
- Sismondo, Sergio. *An introduction to Science and Technology Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)
- Skinner, Quentin. "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas" in Tully, J. (ed.). *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988)
- Skinner, Quentin (ed.). *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
- Skjerven, Astrid (ed.). *Designkompetanse—Utvikling, forskning og undervisning* (Oslo: Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo, 2005)
- Skjerven, Astrid. "Great Expectations—The foundation of a design concept" in Halén, W. and Wickman, K. (eds.). *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic*

- countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003)
- Skjerven, Astrid. *Goodwill for Scandinavian Design—Lunningprisen 1951-70* [Doctoral dissertation] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 2001)
- Skjerven, Astrid. *Arne Korsmo—Designvirksomhet i etterkrigstiden* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1996)
- Skaare, Jørgen. “Kunsthåndverk og industri” in Anker, P., *et al. Norsk brukskunst* (Oslo: Dansk-norsk fond, 1969)
- Smith, Charles Saumarez. “Material Culture and Mass Consumption” [book review] in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1988
- Smith, Terry. *Making The Modern—Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)
- Solberg, Helge, *et al.* (eds.). *Arkitektur i 1000 år—Arkitekturguide for Trondheim* (Trondheim: Trondhjems Arkitektforening, 1999)
- Solstad, Dag. *Roman 1987* (Oslo: Oktober, 1987)
- Solstad, Dag. *Forsøk på å beskrive det ugjennomtrengelige* (Oslo: Oktober, 1984)
- Solstad, Dag. *Gymnaslærer Pedersens beretning om den store politiske vekkelsen som har hjemmøkt vårt land* (Oslo, Oktober, 1982)
- Solstad, Dag. *Arild Asnes, 1970* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1971)
- Somers, Margaret R. “The Privatization of Citizenship—How to Unthink a Knowledge Culture” in Bonnell, V.E. and Hunt, L. (eds.). *Beyond the Cultural Turn—New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1999)
- Sparke, Penny. *A Century of Car Design* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2002)
- Sparke, Penny. “Imagining Consumers—Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning. By Regina Lee Blaszczyk” [book review] in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2001
- Sparke, Penny. “Cookware to Cocktail Shakers: The Domestication of Aluminum in the United States, 1900-1939” in Nicols, S. (ed.). *Aluminum by Design* (Pittsburgh/New York: Carnegie Museum of Art/Abrams, 2000)
- Sparke, Penny. *As Long As It's Pink—The Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora, 1995)
- Sparke, Penny (ed.). *The Plastics Age—From Bakelite to Beanbags and beyond* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1993)
- Sparke, Penny. ““A Home for Everybody?”: Design, Ideology and the Culture of the Home in Italy, 1945-1972” in Greenhalgh, P. (ed.). *Modernism in Design* (London: Reaktion, 1990)
- Sparke, Penny. *An Introduction to Design and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986)
- Sparke, Penny. *Consultant Design—The History and Practice of the Designer in Industry* (London: Pেমbridge Press, 1983)
- Spitz, René. *hfg ulm—The View behind the Foreground: The Political History of the Ulm School of Design 1953-1968* (Stuttgart/London: Edition Axel Menges, 2002)
- Stafford, S., Mash, M., Curtis, B., Robertson, G., Bird, J., Tickner, L. and Putnam, T. (eds.). *The BLOCK Reader in Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996)
- Stanfield, Peter. “Heritage Design: The Harley-Davidson Motor Company” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1992
- Stang, Kaare. *Art Deco i Norge* (Oslo: Press, 2005)

- Star, Susan Leigh and Griesemer, James R. "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39" in *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 19, No. 3., 1989
- Staudenmaier, John M. *Technology's Storytellers: Reweaving the Human Fabric* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985)
- Stavenow, Åke. "Skapande människa" in Ekholm, K. Huldt, Å.H. and Stavenow, Å. *Jacob Prytz—12. juni 1886-1956* (Göteborg: Slöjdföreningens skola, 1956)
- Steadman, Philip. *The Evolution of Designs: Biological Analogy in Architecture and the Applied Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)
- Steadman, Philip. "The History and Science of the Artificial" in *Design Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1979
- Steedman, Carolyn. "Culture, Cultural Studies and the Historians" in During, S. (ed.). *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)
- Steen, Albert. *Willy Johansson og Hadeland glassverk* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1984)
- Stemshaug, Inger Helene N. "Sverre Pettersen—En modernismens industridesigner" in Halén, W. (ed.). *Art Deco, Funkis, Scandinavian Design* (Oslo: Orfeus, 1996)
- Stenstadvold, Håkon. "Hermann Bongard—Tegneren" in Opstad, L. (ed.). *Tegneren Hermann Bongard* (Oslo: Kunstindustrimuseet i Oslo, 1971)
- Stokke, Christian. "Tiden før 1932—lastebilene og bussene" in Bertheau, Ø. and Stokke, C. (eds.). *Made in Norway? Historien om forsøk på bilproduksjon i Norge* (Oslo: Norsk Teknisk Museum, 1991)
- Stranger, Ivar. *Keramikeren Ragnar Grimsrud* (Stavanger: Rogaland Kunstnersenter, 1991)
- Sullivan, Louis. *Kindergarten Chats (revised 1918) and other writings* [edited by Athey, Isabella] (New York: George Wittenborn, 1947)
- Suppe, Frederick. "The Search for Philosophic Understanding of Scientific Theories" in Suppe, F. (ed.). *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977)
- Suppe, Frederick. "Exemplars, Theories and Dicipinary Matrixes" in Suppe, F. (ed.). *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977)
- Suppe, Frederick (ed.). *The Structure of Scientific Theories* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977)
- Sørensen, Knut H. "Domestication: the enactment of technology" in Berker, T., Hartmann, M., Punie Y. and Ward, K.J. (eds.). *Domestication of Media and Technology* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006)
- Sørensen, K.H., Aune, M. and Hatling, M. "Against linearity—On the cultural appropriation of science and technology" in Dierkes, M. and Grote, C. von (eds.). *Between Understanding and Trust—The Public, Science and Technology* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000)
- Sørensen, Knut H. *Technology in Use. Two Essays on the Domestication of Artefacts* [STS Working Paper 2/94] (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 1994)
- Sørensen, Knut H. (ed.). *The Car and its Environments—The Past, Present and Future of the Motorcar in Europe* [Proceedings from the COST A4 (Vol. 2) Workshop in Trondheim, Norway—May 6-8 1993] (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities (CEC), Directorate General XII, 1994)
- Tafari, Manfredo and Co, Francesco Dal. *Modern Architecture/2* (Milan/New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1986)
- Tandstad, Kjetil (ed.). *Årbok for Sykkylven 2004* (Sykkylven: Sykkylven sogeemnd, 2004)

- Terragni, A., Libeskind, D. and Rosselli, P. *The Terragni Atlas—Built Architecture* (Milano: Skira, 2004)
- Thau, Carsten and Vindum, Kjeld. *Arne Jacobsen* (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 2001)
- Thompson, Michael. *Rubbish Theory—The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)
- Thue, Anniken. “Kunsthåndverket 1940-1980” in Berg, K., Anker, P., Palme, P. and Tschudi-Madsen, S. (eds.). *Norges kunsthistorie* Vol. 6-7 (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1983)
- Toft, Anders. “Generic [modern] Architecture—Field, Actor-Networks and Pragmatism” in *Nordic Journal of Architectural Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2004
- Torgersen, Arne. *Nach Ihnen, Herr General!—Humanitäre Abenteuer eines Norwegers im Nachkriegseuropa*. (Stuttgart: Ev. Vlg., 1971)
- Tournikiotis, Panayotis. *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999)
- Toyomasu, Mette Grieg. *Fra brukskunst til kunsthåndverk, en fagpolitisk opprydning. Keramikeren Yngvild Fagerheim som eksponent for en kunstnergruppe* [Master thesis] (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, 1997)
- Tschudi-Madsen, Stephan. “Dragestilen: honnør til en hånet stil” in *Årbok—Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum 1949/1950* (Bergen: Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, 1950)
- Tucker, Michael. “Norge I Form: Kunsthåndverk og Design under Industriulturen” [book review] in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 2, No. 2/3, 1989
- Tully, James (ed.). *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988)
- Uriarte, Lucila Fernández. “Modernity and Postmodernity from Cuba” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005
- Valen-Sendstad, Fartein. “Moderne brukskunst på Maihaugen?” in Schjødt, L. (ed.). *Norsk kunsthåndverk—Landsforbundet Norsk Brukskunst ved 50-årsjubiléet 1968* (Oslo: Bonytt/LNB, 1968)
- Vattimo, Gianni. *La fine della modernità* (Milano: Garzanti, 1985)
- Veblen, Thorstein. *The theory of the leisure class: an economic study of institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1899)
- Venturi, Robert. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966)
- Verbeek, Peter-Paul. *What Things Do—Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005)
- Vitta, Maurizio. *Il progetto della bellezza—Il design fra arte e tecnica, 1951-2001* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001)
- Volti, Rudi. “A Century of Automobility” in *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1996
- Vyas, H. Kumar. “The Designer and the Socio-Technology of Small Production” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1991
- Walker, John A. *Design History and the History of Design* (London: Pluto, 1989)
- Weium, Frode (ed.). *Volund 2002* (Oslo: Norsk teknisk museum, 2002)
- Weium, Frode (ed.). *Volund 1999-2000—Plast i det moderne Norge* (Oslo: Norsk teknisk museum, 2001)

- Werne, Finn. *Arkitekturens ismer* (Stockholm: Arkitektur Förlag, 1998)
- White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987)
- Whiteley, Nigel. *Reyner Banham: Historian of the Immediate Future* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2002)
- Whiteley, Nigel. "Olympus and the Market Place: Reyner Banham and Design Criticism" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1997
- Whiteley, Nigel. "Design History or Design Studies?" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995
- Whiteley, Nigel. "Pop, Consumerism, and the Design Shift" in *Design Issues*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1985
- Wick, Rainer. "Critical observations and general remarks about design history" in Pansera, A. (ed.). *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988)
- Wicken, Olav (ed.). *Elektronikk-entreprenørene. Studier av norsk elektronikkforskning og -industri etter 1945* (Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal, 1994)
- Wickman, Kerstin. "Constructing and Reconstructing a Design Identity" in Korvenmaa, P. and Kodres, K. (eds.). *Connecting: A Conference on the Multivocality of Design History & Design Studies [ICDHS 5th conference proceedings]* (Helsinki & Tallinn: University of Art and Design Helsinki & Estonian Academy of Arts, 2006)
- Wickman, Kerstin. "Design Olympics—the Milan Triennials" in Halén, W. and Wickman, K. (eds.). *Scandinavian Design Beyond the Myth—Fifty years of design from the Nordic countries* (Stockholm: Arvinius Förlag/Form Förlag, 2003)
- Wickman, Kerstin (ed.). *Formens rörelse—svensk form genom 150 år* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1995)
- Wickman, Kerstin. "Industridesign" in Widengren, G. (ed.). *Tanken och handen: Konstfack 150 år* (Stockholm: Page One Publishing, 1994)
- Widengren, Gunilla (ed.). *Tanken och handen: Konstfack 150 år* (Stockholm: Page One Publishing, 1994)
- Wildhagen, Fredrik. *Møbeldesigneren Ingmar Relling i perspektiv* (Sykkylven: Sykkylven næringsutvikling A/S, 1991)
- Wildhagen, Fredrik. "The Scandinavian Countries: Design for the Welfare Society" in Pirovano, C. (ed. in chief). *History of Industrial Design—Vol. 3: 1919-1990 The Dominion of Design* (Milano: Electa, 1990)
- Wildhagen, Fredrik. "Towards a methodology of design history" in Pansera, A. (ed.). *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L'Arca, 1988)
- Wildhagen, Fredrik. *Norge i Form—Kunsthåndverk og design under industrikulturen* (Oslo: J.M. Stenersen, 1988)
- Wildhagen, Fredrik. "Flodhesten, Gullfisken og Kristine Valdresdatter—Streamlining og designhistorien" in Gelfer-Jørgensen, M. (ed.). *Nordisk Funktionalisme 1925-1950* (København: Det danske Kunsthåndverkmuseum & Nordisk Forum for Formgivningshistorie, 1986)
- Wildhagen, Fredrik. "Samarbeid og styrke—Nordisk formgivning i tiden etter verdenskrigen" in Bongard, H., Himberg-Larsen, R. and Wildhagen, F. (eds.). *Nordisk kunsthåndverk og design* (Oslo: Landsforbundet norsk brukskunst, 1981)
- Wildhagen, Fredrik. "Formgivning for velferd" in Alnæs, T. (ed.). *Vårt daglige miljø 1918-1978* (Oslo: Landsforbundet norsk brukskunst, 1978)
- Wolfe, Tom. *I am Charlotte Simmons* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2004)
- Wolfe, Tom. *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981)

- Wolfe, Tom. *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965)
- Wollen, Peter and Kerr, Joe (eds.). *Autopia—Cars and Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2002)
- Woodham, Jonathan M. “Local, National and Global: Redrawing the Design Historical Map” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005
- Woodham, Jonathan M. *A Dictionary of Modern Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Woodham, Jonathan M. “Designing Design History: From Pevsner to Postmodernism” [conference paper] (delivered at the conference *Digitisation and Knowledge* at Auckland University of Technology, 14.02.2001)
- Woodham, Jonathan M. *Twentieth-Century Design* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- Woodham, Jonathan M. “Managing British design reform I: fresh perspectives on the early years of the Council of Industrial Design” in *Journal of Design History* Vol. 9, No. 1, 1996
- Woodham, Jonathan M. “Managing British Design Reform II: The Film “Deadly Lampshade”: An Ill-Fated Episode in the Politics of ‘Good Taste’” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1996
- Woodham, Jonathan M. “Resisting Colonization: Design History Has Its own Identity” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995
- Woodham, Jonathan M. *Twentieth-Century Ornament* (London: Studio Vista, 1990)
- Woodham, Jonathan M. “British modernism between the wars: an historical ‘Léger de main’?” in Pansera, A. (ed.). *Tradizione e Modernismo: Design 1918/1940—Atti del convegno* (Milano: L’Arca, 1988)
- Woodham, Jonathan M. “Ceramic History” in Conway, H. (ed.). *Design History—A Student’s Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1987)
- Woodham, Jonathan M. *The Industrial Designer and the Public* (London: Pembroge, 1983)
- Woodhouse, Edward and Patton, Jason W. “Design by Society: Science and Technology Studies and the Social Shaping of Design” in *Design Issues*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2004
- Woolgar, Steve. “What Happened to Provocation in Science and Technology Studies?” in *History and Technology*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2004
- Worden, Suzette and Seddon, Jill. “Women Designers in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s: Defining the Professional and Redefining Design” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1995
- Yagou, Artemis. “Unwanted Innovation—The Athens Design Centre (1961-1963)” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2005
- Yagou, Artemis. “Rethinking Design History From an Evolutionary Perspective: Background and Implications” in *The Design Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 2005
- Ylvisåker, Anne Britt. “How About Stew on Red Roses?” in Malterud, N. and Ylvisåker, A.B. (eds.). *Burning Point Bergen—Ceramics 1950-2000* (Bergen: Kunsthøgskolen i Bergen and Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum, 2002)
- Zahle, Erik (ed.). *Hjemmets brukskunst—Kunsthåndværk og Kunstindustri i Norden* (København: Hassings, 1961)
- Øllgaard, Gertrud. “A Super-Elliptical Moment in the Cultural Form of the Table: A Case Study of a Danish Table” in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1999
- Östergren, Klas. *Gentlemen* [1980] (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1982)
- Østby, Per. *Flukten fra Detroit: Bilens integrasjon i det norske samfunnet* [Doctoral dissertation / STS rapport no. 24] (Trondheim: Universitet i Trondheim, 1995)

- Østby, Per. "Escape from Detroit—The Norwegian conquest of an alien artifact" in Sørensen, K.H. (ed.). *The Car and its Environments—The Past, Present and Future of the Motorcar in Europe* [Proceedings from the COST A4 (Vol. 2) Workshop in Trondheim, Norway—May 6-8 1993] (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities (CEC), Directorate General XII, 1994)
- Østby, Per. "En automatisk fabrikk? Bedriftsetableringer i skjæringspunktet mellom vitenskap og industri" in Wicken, O. (ed.). *Elektronikk-entreprenørene. Studier av norsk elektronikkforskning og -industri etter 1945* (Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal, 1994)
- Østby, Per. *A Steel Phoenix?—The Social Construction of a Modern Car* [STS Working Paper No. 4/91] (Trondheim: University of Trondheim, 1991)
- Østerberg, Dag. *Det moderne—Et essay om verdens kultur 1740-2000* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1999)
- Øverland, Arnulf. *Tre foredrag til offentlig forargelse* (Oslo: Fram, 1933)
- Aars, Ferdinand and Brochmann, Odd. "Norvegia" in Lombardo, I.M., et al. (eds.). *Catalogo della Dodicesima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1960)
- Aars, Ferdinand. *Arts and Crafts—Industrial Design in Norway* (Oslo: Dreyers forlag & The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of Cultural Relations, 1957)
- Aars, Ferdinand. "Le arti decorative e industriali in Norvegia" in Lombardo, I.M., et al. (eds.). *Catalogo della Decima Triennale* (Milano: Centro Studi Triennale, 1954)
- Aars, Ferdinand. *Arts and Crafts—Industrial Design in Norway* (Oslo: The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Office of Cultural Relations, 1953)
- Aars, Harald, et al. (eds.). *Foreningen Brukskunst Aarbok 1918-1919*, [yearbook] (Kristiania: Foreningen Brukskunst & Kirstes boktrykkeri, 1920)
- Aas, Anne-Lise. "Keramikk og glass" in Altern, I.D. and Pedersen, H. (eds.). *Hjemmet og vi—en bok om liv og arbeid* (Oslo: Norsk faglitteratur—G. Reinert, 1955)
- Aaslestad, Petter. "En utpreget modernist. Haakon Bugge Mahrt som skjønnlitterær forfatter" in Furusest, S., Paulson, S.J. and Aaslestad, P. (eds.). *Saklighet og sanselighet. Norsk prosa-modernisme på 1930-tallet* (Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk, 2000)